

BANDWAGON

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BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc.

May-June 2012 • Volume 56, Number 3

Fred D. Pfening III ————— **Editor and Publisher**

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Please advise Secretary-Treasurer Bob Cline of address changes. Issues not delivered because of a change of address will not be replaced free of charge. Please advise the CHS that you are moving when or before you do so.

Thanks

Once again, a number of people assisted in completing this issue. Thanks to Kate Browne, Maureen Brunsdale, Fred Dahlinger, Janet Davis, Steve Gossard, Kelly McCoy, Janet Pfening, Ralph Pierce, John Polacsek, Dave Price, Yesenia Rodriguez, Peter Shrake, Philip Weyland, and especially Mark Schmitt who went way beyond the call of duty in locating photographs.

John and Mardi Wells deserve kudos for their innovative graphics and layout.

The Cover

Arguably, Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows made the big time on April 6, 1895. That day the circus opened its first engagement in Chicago, lasting until April 28. The engagement marked a sea-change for the show. In the company's previous eleven years, the longest the troupe had appeared in one locale was two days, and that occurred only four times. Milwaukee, with a population around 220,000 in the early 1890s, was the biggest city on the route prior to Chicago, which boasted 1,600,000 people, making it the second largest city in North America.

It was also the show's first time indoors. It appeared at Tattersall's, a horse auction emporium named after the famous British equine exchange founded by Richard Tattersall in 1766. Based on the agreement the Ringlings finalized in mid-February, it appears the building wanted the show at least as much as the show wanted the building. An architect was hired to remodel the venue, making it more circus-friendly, new seating was installed, and an area under the seats was modified to accommodate the menagerie. The hall made these concessions, noted the *Chicago Tribune* of February 16, 1895 because it expected the circus "to popularize Tattersall's and incidentally increase the value of property in that section of the city."

Ringling gave Chicago its first night circus parade on April 4. Illuminated by calcium lights and torches, the march took twenty minutes to pass a given point. Sparks from a torch set fire to a cage housing exotic animals, adding even more excitement to the occasion.

The performance received good, if not great, reviews. It began with a concert by Alessandro Liberati and his band, the main feature of the show and the focus of much of the advertising. Principal equestriennes Elena Ryland and Julia Lowande, the Dacoma flying trapeze act, the Eddy family acrobats, the Landauer living statues, and Achille Philian on a rolling globe were all singled out for special acclaim by the Chicago press. Its eighteen displays were a lot of circus with as many as six acts appearing simultaneously. It concluded with the always-popular hippodrome races.

Chicago's upper crust turned out on opening night. William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, was among the spectators in the high priced seats. Business built over the run of the engagement. While Alf. T. Ringling

proclaimed business "phenomenally successful," other evidence suggests he was optimistic about the truth.

The American version of Tattersall's never approached the success of its English forebearer, and the building was demolished in 1910. In fact, its fate had been determined ten years earlier when a crooked fight at the building led Chicago to ban boxing until 1926. While the venue hosted a wide range of entertainment such as wrestling, bicycle races, football, cat shows and ice hockey, boxing was the money maker, and when the fights stopped the building became financially shaky.

The Ringlings must not have been completely satisfied with Tattersall's as the show played there only four times, 1895 to 1897, and 1899, skipping the Windy City altogether in 1898 and 1900. In contrast, a Ringling-owned circus opened at the Chicago Coliseum, which opened in 1899, every season from 1901 to 1918. After the Barnum and Ringling shows united in 1919, the troupe played Chicago almost every year through 1956, always under canvas, usually near Lake Michigan.

The courier on this month's cover was printed solely for the Chicago stand. It measures 10½" x 14¼", and contains only four pages. The inside pictures various acts, the menagerie, and an artist's rendition of the show appearing in Tattersall's. The back depicts Liberati and his band in color. The emblem in the middle right bears the Latin acronym "S.P.Q.R.," which roughly translates to modern English as "The Senate and People of Rome." Used in the last decades of the Republic and for over three hundred years of the Empire, it was a way Romans identified themselves as a society. In this case it was a way the Ringlings linked themselves to the glory of Rome as can be seen by the chariot race at the top of the image and the faux Roman typography of their name at the bottom.

This courier was produced by the Courier Company of Buffalo, New York. Starting that year, Courier upgraded its artistry, replacing realistic images with more impressionistic ones. The illustration on the cover, which was almost certainly also used on posters, shows the influence of the Art Nouveau movement, and contrasts dramatically from the work of other contemporary show print houses, Strobridge Lithograph in particular. Ringling began buying paper from Courier in 1891 and the firm continued as the show's main vendor through 1908. Starting

in 1909 Strobridge became the exclusive lithograph supplier to show, and Courier Company, the designer of some of the finest circus illustrations ever created, never spilled another drop of ink on a lithograph for the World's Greatest Shows. Original in Pfening Archives. Fred D. Pfening III

2013 CHS Convention

The annual Circus Historical Society convention will be held in Peru, Indiana, from July 16 to 20, 2013. The conference begins the morning of the 17th with a tour of the Paul Kelly Farm, a few miles from Peru, followed by lunch and a concert presented by Charles Conrad and a sixty piece circus band. Mike Beauchamp concludes the day with an account of the life of Terrell Jacobs, the Lion King, and a great early supporter of the CHS.

This location was originally his winter quarters. He bought the twelve acre site in 1941. He lost control of it in 1945 when, as part of his divorce from wife Dolly, Arthur Wirtz, the Chicago hockey and ice show magnate and circus producer, bought the acreage. He allowed Jacobs to continue using it as his home base. Paul and Dorothy Kelly bought the property in 1954.

The following day is devoted to historical presentations. They include Dick Moore discussing circus lantern slides, Lane Talburt with a video about African-Americans on circuses, with other topics planned. The CHS auction is in the evening.

On July 19 members visit the International Circus Hall of Fame, located on the grounds that were once the winter quarters of the American Circus Corporation. A morning tour of the site and a catered lunch will be followed by a performance of the Hall of Fame Circus. That night conventioners enjoy a performance of the Peru Amateur Circus.

The last day begins with the Circus City Festival Parade. That afternoon we assemble at the Miami County Museum to view its new circus exhibit. The convention concludes with the Circus Hall of Fame annual induction ceremony and banquet.

The Best Western Circus City Inn is convention headquarters. Rooms are \$85/night, which includes a continental breakfast. Reservations at 765-473-8800. Across the street is a no-frills Knights Inn with a rate of \$49/night. Reservations are at 800-843-5644.

The cost of convention registration has yet to be determined.

Enroute with The Greatest Show on Earth

by Jimmy O'Neill

From late May through mid-July 1951 Ringling-Barnum ticket taker Jimmy O'Neill wrote a mimeographed newsletter about activities on the show. Among those receiving the bulletin was Sverre O. Braathen, Madison, Wisconsin mega-fan who was sent a copy by his friend Bill Antes, Ringling's radio and television man. Braathen was impressed, asking O'Neill to include him on the subscription list. "That is the best newsletter I have seen come off a circus in years and years," he noted in a July 3 letter, continuing, "Information as to lots, hauls, weather, business, visitor and information such as you are giving is tops."

O'Neill responded three days later, stating that he considered it a hobby and sent out three hundred copies a week at his own expense. He was proud of a newspaper write up about the newsletter, and that two libraries asked to be on the mailing list.

This account is reminiscent of the day-by-day diaries commonly found in route books. While Ringling-Barnum issued a route book in 1951, it did not contain a day-by-day account of incidents and events occurring on the show, making O'Neill's comments a unique record of the tour.

Punctuation has been regularized, and on occasion spelling corrected. In a few instances text deemed superfluous, the future route for example, has been deleted. The original newsletters are in the Sverre O. Braathen Papers and used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library. Braathen also took all the photographs used in this article.

Already the Greatest Show on Earth has been out under canvas for four weeks. Our opening under canvas in Washington drew much attention from the press and the public alike. Arriving there from our six day engagement in the Boston Garden we found Master Producer Cecil B. DeMille and his Paramount movie-producing crews in readiness to shoot the actual circus scenes for the forthcoming circus film *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Paramount's elaborate movie-making equipment was scattered all over the back lot. Cecil B. DeMille, Betty

Hutton, and Dorothy Lamour had their own dressing trailers and Paramount set up their own cook house.

Henry Wilcoxon, principal player in DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*, was among those included in the Hollywood directorial staff.

Circus ads in the local papers played up the Hollywood angle announcing that Betty Hutton, Jimmy Stewart, Dorothy Lamour,

Cornel Wilde, Charlton Heston, Gloria Graham, and Lyle Bettger and DeMille could be seen in person and in action for the actual filming of the circus screen epic under the big top.

John Ringling North, Circus President, will make his film debut in the movie appearing as chairman in a sequence showing a meeting of the circus directors as they plan the season's tour. Incidentally, a season's tour may include 150 cities covering a traveling distance of some 20,000 miles.

As was announced the movie stars did appear and the camera crews were grinding away daily. Appreciative audiences were generous in their applause as the Hollywood stars performed their various stunts.

Nitely after the last show Betty Hutton practiced her flying trapeze routine and won the admiration of all for her determined courage and ability.

The James E. Cooper Top of the Circus Fans Association welcomed us to Washington with an interesting pamphlet which was thoughtfully placed at each place setting in the Cook House. Melvin D. Hildreth, Ex-President of the Circus Fans Association, and Dr. Wm. M. Mann, Chairman of the James E. Cooper Top, were daily visitors. Highlight

of the Circus Fans Association's 25th Anniversary [convention] was the Buffet-Supper Dance held at the swank Hotel Shoreham Terrace Room where an excellent time was had by all and circus personnel

renewed friendships with Circus Fans from all over the country.

We particularly liked the Association's keynote of hospitality—"Washington likes the circus and we want you to like Washington" and its slogan—"We fight anything that fights the circus."

Karl Kae Knecht, newly-elected President of the CFA, is a nationally-known cartoonist and columnist with the *Evansville* (Indiana) *Courier*, and was well-remembered for his interesting cartoon of the Ringling Brothers that appeared on the front page of that journal when we played Evansville last year.

During our Washington engagement Hopalong Cassidy



Author Jimmy O'Neill on duty as a ticket collector on the front door of Ringling-Barnum in Chicago on July 18, 1951. All illustrations used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Performance director Pat Valdo, left, and show vice-president Henry Ringling North confer in Chicago on July 21, 1951.

made a guest appearance at one of the performances in full cowboy regalia and received a tremendous ovation.

Clown Felix Adler planed into Philadelphia to make his 12th annual radio appearance on the Horn & Hardart's Children's Hour program. Though the program was broadcast from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Sunday morning, Felix made it back in time to work the 2:15 matinee.

Moving on to Philadelphia for our second week under canvas a new and more conveniently located lot at South Broad and Municipal Stadium gave us repeated sell-out houses.

Thousands of underprivileged children were guests of Gimbel Brothers 38th Annual Circus Party at our opening afternoon performance at which Benedict Gimbel and former Judge Nochem Winnet were guests.

Again DeMille was on hand to do much of his "on-location" shooting and Quaker City circus goers were eager to glimpse the movie stars in their circus roles. Betty Hutton's flying trapeze performance, Dottie Lamour's dancing, Jimmy Stewart's clowning and Cornel Wilde's horse riding act drew loud and long applause. Gloria Graham and Lyle Bettger went through their elephant number as would veteran circus troupers. Charlton Heston's appearance, personality and portrayal of a circus manager (the part he plays in the movie) should earn him a few higher rungs on his cinema climbing ladder.

Frank Palumbo, Philadelphia's foremost impresario and restaurateur, entertained his circus friends at his famous nitery with an elaborate dinner party.

Parking for the circus was greatly facilitated at this new location by an enterprising drive-in theatre operator who discontinued his film showings to accommodate circus goers. The Philadelphia press was most generous to circus publicity.

One of the local dailies carried front page pictorial and news items several times during our six day stand there.

Well-timed with our Philly showing was the release of *Look* magazine's June 5th issue turning their American Spotlight on "DeMille Films the Greatest Show On Earth." DeMille and company were busily grinding cameras into the wee a.m. hours filming the big one's tear-down after which we made our departure for Easton, Pa.—the season's first one day stand.

Easton, Pa.—Monday, May 28

Meuser Park offered a nice, grassy lot but the day was dismally gray. Some 75 children from the Easton Children's home were

matinee guests of the circus. General admission tickets had been on sale at the downtown advance sale for the first time this year. The public's response to it was good so both afternoon and night houses were filled to near capacity.

Notably missing were DeMille the Dynamic, and his Paramount crew having departed to Hollywood to continue their studio production finishes to the movie. Emmett Kelly, clown king of quaint drollery, also made the West Coast trip to work with Jimmy Stewart on their clown movie scenes.

Harold Ronk, featured vocalist with the show, returned to New York and Willie Krause, one of our flying trapeze stars, took over the singing chores. Off in the distance the huge Dixie Cup Plant (home of the famous Dixie Cups) framed the front entrance of the midway.

Reading, Pa.—Tuesday, May 29

The *Reading Eagle* front-paged our arrival and chronicled:

"Early this morning, hundreds of Readingites flocked to the circus grounds at Kutztown Road and Hiester's Lane to watch the mammoth show unload and set up for its two performances here today. In spite of the fact that everything was hustle, bustle and disordered, the spectators saw a wonderful show.

"Hungry lions and tigers were being fed their breakfast—big juicy cuts of succulent, red horsemeat. Nine herds of elephants dined on tons of hay and took their morning baths—in black mud and straw.

"Almost 1,000 roustabouts—circus strongmen who erect the show on the lot and disappear until time for it all to come down again—descended on the lot, laid out the equipment, drove stakes (with a gasoline-driven pile driver), erected the five huge tent poles that hold up the 'big top,' unrolled canvas and put up the main circus tent.

"Tractors and trucks pulled and tugged the hundreds of trailers and vans into position for unloading. And out of the trailers came thousands of wardrobe trunks, high-wire equipment, magicians' paraphernalia, banners, lighting and sound equipment, seats for the spectators and the endless number of gadgets used in a circus performance.

"Across the street, a village of circus people began to mushroom shortly after daylight. First up went the 'chow' tent where the circus performers eat. In short order, followed the colorful tents and trailers of the performers who arrived here last night from their stand in Easton.

"Youngsters and parents alike crowded as close as possible to



The *Greatest Show on Earth*, Cecil B. DeMille's Academy Award winning film, was shot on the show during the period covered in this narrative.



Two strings of sleepers on Illinois Central tracks near lakefront show ground south of Chicago's Soldier Field on July 22, 1951.

watch the keepers feeding the snarling cats during mid-morning. A circus butcher, bloody to his elbows, carved the meat which the keepers tossed into the cages. Of particular interest was one cage which housed a mother tiger and her two offspring. Although the mother's voice growled sharp-clawed authority, the meowing of the cubs sounded very much like that of an ordinary house cat. The papa tiger in an adjacent cage displayed neither the domesticity of the mama or the playfulness of the cubs. He growled ferociously and swiped a long paw through the bars of the cage at the keeper as he approached with the food.

"The elephants, perennial favorites of most circusgoers because of their ponderous size and apparent gentleness, stood in a long line waiting to be put to work. Half a dozen keepers with long, barbed sticks walked up and down the line keeping them in place.

"The elephants with their crusty hides, and small sleepy-looking eyes, were constantly moving around. They moved slowly forward and backward in line, shifting their weight from one side to the other, and frequently standing on only three legs or standing with their legs crossed as humans do. In the old days, elephants were used to shift equipment around. Now they only stand and wait for show time and noisily blow mud and straw over their heads with their trunks.

"As the morning progressed, the nakedness of the field disappeared under the scores of tents and red trailers which dotted the area, and the tempo with which workmen moved slowed down, until at 1 p.m., when spectators for the first performance started arriving, the circus was all in place and ready for action."

Lancaster, Pa.—Wednesday, May 30

Memorial Day in the Red Rose City was celebrated with a delicious fried chicken dinner in the Cook House. Matinee doors were late but the show was on time and a goodly crowd attended though the evening house drew a fair attendance out at the

Manheim Pike Airport Grounds.

The local newspaper—*The Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal*—was generous with its front page account of Lancaster's father and son artist team, Kiehl and Christian Newswanger, who are producing a series of circus paintings in contrast to the Amish studies for which they are famous. To gain background for their venture both are working for the circus. Kiehl is painting circus wagons and Christian is a carpenter. In addition, both will appear in DeMille's new movie in the role of artists traveling with the Big Top. Incidentally, the younger Newswanger was a schoolmate at Haverford School with Lyle Bettger, the movie star who plays the movie role of elephant trainer.

The Newswangers spent two winters in Sarasota studying horses and circus riders. So they have associated themselves

closely with the circus in order to absorb all facets of circus life—what goes on underneath and behind the scenes as well as the glitter and glamour of the Big Top. They claim their difficult job is taking the flamboyant circus material and reducing it to the primitive approach. After they complete their circus paintings next fall they expect to take them to Hollywood where they will hold an exhibition simultaneously with the release of the movie *The Greatest Show On Earth*.

Wilmington, Delaware—Thursday, May 31

Since last year a new drive-in theatre has been built on the old circus lot and it forced us to find a new lot out at Rodgers Corner which is about four miles from downtown Wilmington. We were late getting the matinee under way but our one day engagement drew a good Wilmington reception.

Magazine testimonial ads are now appearing featuring Betty Hutton and announcing her new starring role in her newest starring vehicle—*The Greatest Show on Earth*.

TENTative Plans: Word has been received from Poughkeepsie, N.Y. that that town's city council has okayed our Sunday showing there June 17th by a unanimous vote so no violation of State Sunday Blue Laws will take place. It is almost quite certain that we will play Chicago again this year on our way to the West Coast. A five day stand in the Windy City is likely to be scheduled though definite dates are not presently known. Rumors have it that we will day – and date with Mills Bros. Circus when we play Milwaukee, July 24th.

Baltimore, Maryland—Friday and Saturday, June 1 & 2

New lots seem to be the order of the day this season and in keeping with the trend we were newly-sited here out at Lawrence Park on the North Point Boulevard. This main artery of traffic made transportation easily accessible. The weatherman's prediction of high temperatures proved to be an uncomfortable reality, but

Baltimoreans turned out in great numbers despite the heat. The Big Top's new ventilation system proved its worth.

It was here in Baltimore that the Geraldos had their unfortunate fall last year. This year's performance failed to produce any mishaps.

Trenton, New Jersey—Sunday, June 3

Railroad switching delayed our arrival here until noon. Show doors didn't open until 4:30 p.m. Show time was fifteen minutes later. It was a hot sunny day but the goodly crowd was patient.

National publicity for the Big One continues in banner style. *Life* magazine's June 4th issue carried the story about Gloria, our baby giraffe, who was born in Boston earlier this year. *Argosy's* June issue offered a condensation of circus vet Doc Henderson's very interesting book *Circus Doctor*. This month's *Grade Teacher* magazine featured an article on "I Join the Circus" for juvenile readerships.

Newark, New Jersey—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, June 4, 5, & 6

Among the 3,000 at our opening matinee were 300 crippled children who attended as guests of the Newark's Elks Lodge Number 21. A light rain marred our first night show here and a muddy lot prevailed throughout our engagement at Frelinghuysen and McClellan Avenues.

Reserved seat prices were scaled at \$4 and \$3 with general admission prices ranging at \$1.50 for adults and \$0.75 for children. Though we experienced several straw houses, "turnaways," [we] found some of the best reserve seats begging. Newark went for the "blues" in a big way necessitating "giveaways" on the end reserve seat sections.

In reviewing the show drama critic Guy Savine of the *Newark Evening News* wrote: "The latest extravaganza to be staged by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey abruptly ceased being a



Pinito Del Oro and her husband Juan De La Fuente in Milwaukee, July 24, 1951.

spectacle one hour after yesterday's performance started and suddenly became all circus.

"The transformation was due exclusively to the fact a beautiful young girl, Pinito Del Oro, ascended a high trapeze and performed such wonders that for the moment the heat of the afternoon was forgotten.

"Swinging her trapeze in great arcs 50 feet above the tanbark, Miss Pinto balanced herself without holding on with her hands, first on two feet, then one foot—then on her head.

"Although surrounded by a cast of the great and the colorful, not to mention the beautiful, Miss Pinito was the outstanding performer on the show. Born in Valencia, she has been in this country just a year. She speaks little English. On the trapeze, she lets her work do its own talking. In her dressing room, she just smiles—while her husband of two years rattles off Spanish at intruders.

"However, she makes you understand that she comes from a family that has been in the death-defying business for generations, that she is happy here and is never scared when she is performing.

"The circus, which today opened the second day of its three-day stand on the big Frelinghuysen Avenue lot, is in the tradition which seems destined someday to see it become a mammoth variety show, rather than a circus. There are fewer animals and more girls than ever before.

"Like Miss Pinto, the average circus girl seems to run to beauty and muscles. Those who take part in the 21 acts which make up the program could hold their own with the average Broadway chorus line. But unlike the chorines, they have a dizzying competency whether aloft or aground.



Putting blankets on elephants for Circus Serenade spectacle in Minneapolis, July 28, 1951.

"In a streamlining effort, the menagerie has been moved into the main tent. This makes for fewer animals, but seemed to please the parents who didn't have to walk through as much dust as in prior years.

"The clowns appeared more numerous—and more original. Ernie Burch, former Newarker who now is a resident of Linden, continues to enhance his own standing in clown circles. Burch is a perfectionist. He won a movie role in the circus picture Cecil DeMille is making and may soon desert the circus for Hollywood."

Our next stop will be in Hicksville, Long Island, N.Y., and from there we head up New England way. Hope to give you all the dope from there when time permits.

Hicksville, Long Island, N.Y.—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 7, 8 & 9

Our six performances here were sold out to the American Legion who sponsored the circus for the benefit of the Manhasset Legion Memorial Fund. Legionnaires acted as ticket sellers, ticket takers and ushers and in general commandeered the show. All general admission tickets—adult and children alike—were priced at two dollars while reserve seats sold for three, four and five dollars. (This was the same as last year except that top price seats cost six dollars.)

Breakdown of prices was as follows: \$2 seats—(Admission .90—Voluntary Contribution 1.10); \$3 seats—(Admission 1.20—Voluntary Contribution 1.80); \$4 seats—(Admission 1.50—Voluntary Contribution 2.50); \$5 seats—(Admission 1.80—Voluntary Contribution 3.20)

Specific note was made to all purchasers that "The entire amount of this donation is deductible from income tax, as a legal contribution to the American Legion."

From a transportation angle our railroad jump from Newark, N.J. to Hicksville, Long Island was the most expensive one ever made



Carmen Slayton, wife of side show ticket seller Dick Slayton, at the laundry wagon. The show had an entire railroad car for laundry and dry cleaning purposes. Minneapolis, July 28, 1951.

in circus history. Last year, the Ringling circus became the first show to move through the Hudson and East River tunnels and this similar move cost approximately \$288 a mile. This year's rail move cost almost \$237 a mile. Average per mile rate for the show's regular move is said to cost from \$20 to \$30. Personnel sleepers moved through the Pennsylvania Tunnel under the Hudson and East Rivers while the flats and stock cars were "ferried" across to Long Island.

The *New York Herald Tribune* devoted a column and a half to the Legionnaires Hicksville undertaking.

Before the opening matinee a local drum and bugle corps gave the patrons a rousing musical welcome both on the midway and in the Big Top.

Reliable Legion sources revealed that this year's circus benefit was another successful venture and that plans will probably be negotiated for another one next season.

Bridgeport, Conn.—Monday, June 11

We arrived at Seaside Park about 9:30 Sunday morning and by 4 p.m. everything was in readiness for Monday's performance. The majority of those who were "hotel-ing-up" checked in at the Barnum Hotel, Bridgeport's favorite hostelry for Ringlingites.

Bridgeport is the hometown of P.T. (Phineas Taylor) Barnum and his philanthropic inclinations found a generous outlet in this industrial city. In commemoration of the famous showman Bridgeport has dedicated the Barnum Festival which will be held this year on July 3rd, 4th and 5th. In the past two years the circus showed here in connection with the Festival.

Printed on the reverse side of the tickets this year is the advertisement—"Be sure to see Cecil B. DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*. Cecil B. DeMille's next attraction is *The Greatest Show on Earth*. If the *Greatest Show on Earth* is being photographed at this performance the holder hereby consents to the



American Beauty float used in Circus Serenade spec. Left to right, Dolores Murphy, Norma Wright, and Nena Unus (Furtner), Chicago, July 18-22, 1951.

photographing and recording of his appearance as a spectator in connection therewith." Ironically enough, *Samson and Delilah* was Monday's cinematic feature at one of the local movie houses.

Many of us have fond memories of the movie *Samson and Delilah* for it was in 1949 while we were laying in Los Angeles that Cecil B. DeMille so cordially invited all Ringling circus personnel to a private morning preview which was actually *Samson's* world premiere.

Monday morning's weather man, in an unexpected sleight-of-hand routine, produced a gray November Day for Bridgeport's Annual June Circus Day. An official Weather Bureau report recorded a reading of 51 degrees at 5 a.m. and many topcoats were in evidence throughout the day.

Circus-minded Bridgeport turned out in great numbers for both performances. Both shows were "turnaways" in the end reserve seat sections. Literally and numerically thousands of spectators hugged the roped-off restricted areas surrounding the Big Top. Circus fever ran a high temperature which was in no small way attributed to the press front page efforts of both the Bridgeport's *Telegram* and *Post*.

Doc Henderson's book *Circus Doctor* was reviewed in the Bridgeport's *Sunday Post* by book reviewer W. G. Rogers.

The Bishop Historical Room of Bridgeport's Public Library houses one of America's outstanding collection of circusana and it was here that we learned that Leslie Fairchild, Bridgeport's industrial-artist, has donated 15 of his circus paintings to the San Antonio Public Library in Texas to be added to the famous Harry Hertzberg circus collection. This is supposed to be the most expensive collection of circusana in the world. These paintings were displayed last year in the Barnum Hotel and included portraits of our own famous clowns Emmett Kelly, Felix Adler and Lou Jacobs.

New Haven, Conn.—Tuesday, June 12

Suitable grounds were not available in New Haven so we tented on the deep, sandy shores of Long Island Sound out in Marse Park, West Haven. A cool breeze fanned the sun's warm rays playing tug-of-war in an uncomfortable sort of way. Nightfall's Novemberness brought out topcoats.

The deep sand offered stubborn resistance to the heavy equipment. Two and three "cats" were used to spot each seat wagon. Matinee doors opened at 1:50 and Merle Evans' baton motioned for the opening overture as the clock struck three.

This was our first engagement here in seven years and we received a very enthusiastic welcome—both shows were sold out.

Despite the deep sand, tear-down was accomplished in good time. We were ready to return to the coaches at one a.m.

Little thoughts that we're beginning to catch up on: Did you know that Felix Adler has spent 41 years developing his clown makeup and that he has now appeared on 42 television shows. That Charles (Liberty Horse Act) Mroczkowski is scripting his circus memoirs for publication. That Hubert Castle has worked his center ring wire act for 31 years.

Providence, R.I.—Wednesday, June 13

Through the show was billed as playing Providence it was actually located in Pawtucket. Thousands of early risers were on hand to see a new city—the circus city—being built at the McHale Show Grounds. Pawtucket was the host to the Greatest Show on Earth, supplanting Providence as the circus capital of Rhode Island.

Show doors opened at 2 p.m. and the show started at 2:45. About 200 students of the Sockanosset School (Howard, R.I.) were matinee guests of the circus.

Bridgeport we had a black cinder lot; in New Haven sand; and here we found gravel offering some stake-driving resistance.

Two strikes—the Rhode Island bakery strike and the Pawtucket school strike—were in effect but neither was a hindrance to circus activity. Since there was no school the young moppets furthered their education by viewing the awe-inspiring physical feats taking place under the Big Top.

Circus Fans Mr. & Mrs. W. A. Tomer drove over from Boston for the day. Son Bob spent two of his college summer vacations working in our Usher Department and we learned that he is now PFC Robert Tomer of the 25th Air Division stationed in Portland, Oregon.

For many years newspapermen have been dressing as clowns, touring the circus lot and reporting their impressions. Yesterday, clown Felix Adler turned reporter and mingled with the press. Today's *Providence Journal* carried a two column spread of this reversible man-bites-dog story. Said Felix: "There is too much movement in the circus today for a gag that takes time to develop. You have to hit the people squarely with something that appeals to them immediately—say, maybe that's like the newspaper business with its ever changing play of important news."

Worcester, Mass.—Thursday, June 14

The circus grounds this year were out in Shrewsbury on the Turnpike and South Quinsigamond Avenue.

Alighting from the coaches about 8 a.m. a driving rain greeted us. Someone made the remark that it would be raining all day and sure enough the weather man was obligated enough not to dispute that climatical claim for when we returned to the coaches from the lot



Moonlight Melodies float in Circus Serenade spec, Emma Castro atop, Chicago, July 18, 1951.

it was almost one a.m. and still raining. With or without rain gear such a day is a long, drawn-out, tiresome one. Psychologically as well as physically wet feet add to the discomfiture of tiredness.

The rain didn't halt the determinedness of the local people for we played to two very good houses considering the wet weather.

Bill Moiles in the *Worcester Daily* wrote a terrific article of the powerful and basic appeal of the circus

Father Ed Sullivan, circus priest, visited with us for the day as did Melvin D. Hildreth, Washington, D.C. attorney.

Springfield, Mass.— Friday, June 15

After yesterday's continuous rain and mud we more than welcomed the grassy lot at Hampden Park. It was like a thick carpeting of velvet green cushioned to that easy-on-the-feet feeling—a lot that circus people dream of. The day was gray, misty, threatening one and about 4:30 the threat turned into mild decision and we had a light sprinkling of rain. However, the day's business was good.

From an Associated Press release dated June 14th from Poughkeepsie, N.Y. we learned that: "The American Legion today called off a benefit performance of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus scheduled for next Sunday because it said Governor Dewey had ordered state police to enforce the Sunday blue law prohibiting such entertainment.

"The legion arranged some time ago for the circus appearance here as a benefit for disabled veterans and the town of Poughkeepsie had issued a permit.

"The Legion circus committee sent a telegram to the Governor demanding that state and county golf courses, amusement and swimming areas and other entertainment be stopped immediately and all previous blue law violators prosecuted.

"The committee said that 'our original inquiry showed there would be no interference with the Sunday showing.'"

So with that cancelling of the Poughkeepsie's Sabbath date that means we'll jump into Albany Sunday and "put-up" for Monday's performance there. Significantly, other New York State Sunday dates may be cancelled likewise.

Plainville, Conn.—Saturday, June 16

The Plainville Stadium Grounds provided spacious tenting areas and ample parking space.

The show was brought out for the day by Circus, Inc. This non-

profit sharing corporation was formed by twenty progressively civic-minded business men who were determined to bring the Greatest Show on Earth to Plainville for the children. International News Service carried this news story and Plainville (population 10,000) inked its way into national prominence for the day: "Under an agreement between Circus, Inc. and the Ringling management the circus was paid a specified sum by the sponsor, Circus, Inc., with said sponsor handling the receipts and expenses. Both performances drew near capacity houses.

"Officers of Circus, Inc. are: President, William H. Day, a certified public accountant of New Britain; Vice-President, Joseph E. Tinty, a furniture dealer of Plainville; Secretary, Francis J. Di Loreto, a lawyer of New Britain; and Treasurer, Bernard J. Zucker, a certified public accountant of Waterbury.

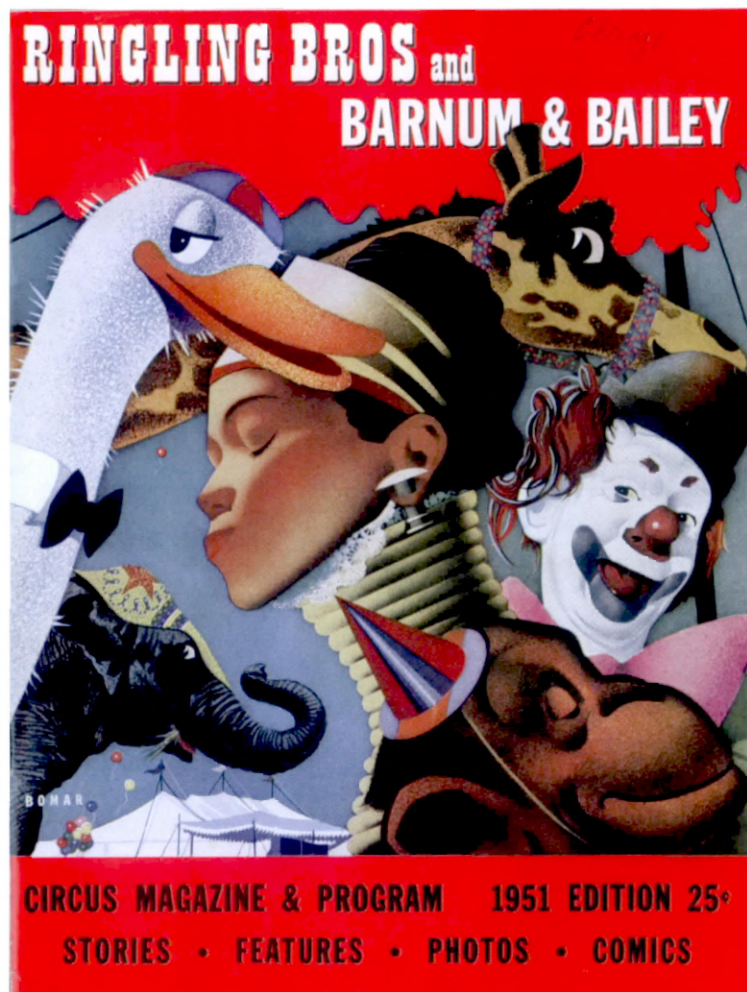
"Mr. Day is a national director and state chairman of the Circus Fans [Association] of America and Mr. Tinty is the owner of the Plainville Stadium.

"Governor and Mrs. John Davis Lodge and family attended the evening performance."

The *Plainville News* carried a nostalgic note that caught our fancy: "This small community is taking the fourth local appearance of 'The Greatest Show on Earth' much more in stride than it did the first circus day three years ago. On that date many ordinarily level-headed citizens went slightly daffy over the fact that the big show was coming to town. . . ."

Sunday dates in New York hangs on a problematical hinge.

Hope to write you about our tour through the Empire State next week.



The 1951 Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus program inexplicably featured a giraffe-neck woman on its cover.

Albany, New York—Sunday and Monday, June 17 & 18

After a six mile haul from the trains we arrived at the Beattie Show Grounds out on the Albany-Troy Road and found the sawdust still warm from the James E. Strates Show which completed their engagement there the previous night. We heard that Beattie Show Grounds are owned by the Strates Show and couldn't understand why the Strates outfit didn't change the name to "Strates Show Grounds."

The Big Top woke up in its Sunday's best wearing a new skirt. This new side wall covers the entire circumference of the world's biggest tent. When we opened under canvas in Washington, D.C. it was with last year's darkened side wall. We understand it was DeMille's request that the old one be used because of better photographing

effects. You might be interested to know that the old side wall was shipped back to Sarasota to be put to utility uses.

Our Sunday "put-up" was accomplished in routine order and everyone looked forward to an evening's relaxation.

Thoughts and After Thoughts While Reading Two Statements in Sunday's *Albany Times-Union*

Statement One: "Every time you blink your eyes in a million dollar picture you miss about \$5,000 worth of film."

Thought: Does that mean if you merely blink your eyes when you see Cecil B. DeMille's newest \$3,000,000 circus picture, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, you'll miss \$15,000 worth of film?

After Thought: Speaking of circus pictures we mention some of the oldies having a circus theme or a circus background such as: *Variety* with Emil Jannings; *Chad Hanna* with Henry Fonda in the leading role; *Halfway to Heaven*, co-starring Jean Arthur and Buddy Rogers; *Laugh Clown Laugh*, a Lon Chaney hit; *Sally of the Sawdust* in which W. C. Fields starred; *The Mighty Barnum* with Wallace Beery as the great showman; and *Zoo in Budapest* having Loretta Young and Gene Raymond in the leading roles. Wonder if you can think of any others?

Statement Two: The day being "Father's Day," crime-buster Senator Kefauver offers a Dad's recipe for the "Ideal Father," giving the necessary traits for same.

Thought: (Aside to the Good Senator from Tennessee) If understanding and companionship are the main things for an "Ideal Father" as you state, why not be more specific by suggesting that "Ideal Fathers" take their children to the circus every year for good, clean, wholesome companionable fun?

After Thought: As James J. Brady, a circus writer, once said, "In the afternoon the tent is a garden of children. The music of laughter is heard there as nowhere else. Every note has the sweetness of honest origin and is fragrant of the heart. It is the child's richest holiday, and his voice, eye and cheek tell a story of supreme pleasure. Whatever appeals so strongly to the whole human family, without regard to age, talent or fortune and produces no moral hurt, deserves well of the world and is entitled to its richest greetings."

Monday gave us our first real warm day since Baltimore, our matinee attendance was light. The local schools were having their regent exams.

A little human interest story: It seems that the International Business Machines Co. of Poughkeepsie had promised some 75 orphan children of that city a visit to the circus for the Poughkeepsie performance which was cancelled. So to keep that promise some of the Legionnaires, who were sponsoring the show, volunteered to take the day off from their regular employment to take the children to the circus here. The children expressed the wish to your correspondent that they would like to talk to a clown.

When we prevailed upon several of the clowns to comply with that request they were more than obliging. We doff our hats to the International Business Machines people for keeping their promise; to the Legionnaires who helped make the promise a reality; and to the clowns who made 75 little dreams come true.

Old Faithful #44 Pole Wagon was recruited from Winter Quarters, Sarasota and pressed into service to facilitate center and quarter pole handling. This means we add one flat car and drop one stock car from our rail section and the number of cars remains the same at 70.

A local professional ball game offered little or no competition to our evening show. We played to a capacity house.

Schenectady, N.Y.—Tuesday, June 19

The circus grounds were situated approximately three miles from downtown Schenectady on the Mariaville and Duaneburg Roads. The lot was of soft loam and dusty.

The matinee was fair but the night's house was big. A group of soldiers from Schenectady General Depot were matinee guests.

Circus Fans who dropped by to say "hello" to your correspondent were: Everett Fuller of Schenectady, N. Y., Sid Foote of Gloversville, N. Y., and John McDonough of Manchester, New Hampshire.

Bob Reynolds, popular Prop Boss, is confined to the Harkness Pavillion, Presbyterian Hospital, NYC with that "old devil virus."

Bill Ballantine, ex-Ringling clown, now turned magazine writer, will be with us for several weeks. Bill is on assignment doing a clown article for one of the slick paper mags.

Catching clown Felix Adler taking his pig, "Omelia, the Younger" out for a stroll in the back lot, we learned that this little piggie is the fifth one Felix has trained for this year already. Pigs get fat fast, eh?

Utica, N.Y.—Wednesday, June 20

An overly-excited crowd waiting at the main entrance until the doors opened at 2:15 p.m. Shortly thereafter their own local boy and our favorite announcer, Dave Murphy, his usual composed manner of assurance altered slightly, stood majestically before the microphone nervously and excitedly twitching his anxious whistle that would command the show's beginning as well as bring his hometown audience under the magic spell of the Big Top.

Today was "Dave's Day" for in so doing it was ambition long and hardworkedly fulfilled as Dave, in all the regal spirit of the real ringmaster, masterfully, split-secondly timed and cued each act flawlessly. Truly, Dave was the center of the performance today as many of his hometown friends sat edgewardly on their cushioned seats actually watching his every enunciation enrapturedly.

Genial Dave's sawdust experience goes back to his high school days. He attended Utica Free School and served as the school



Dave Murphy did some of the announcing during the 1951 tour. This photo taken during the July 15-23, 1950 stand in Chicago.

correspondent for the *Observer-Dispatch*. Local friends recall that even then he was a "bug" on circus life, trouping with the show on his summer vacations. At that time Dave performed his menial chores well and earnestly as would a seasoned trouper, but today, after more than a dozen years absence, he returns, not as a stable boy or a clown's assistant, but as Ringmaster and Announcer. These terms are the ones more popularly used for his real title is Equestrian Director which is one of the most coveted posts on the Greatest Show on Earth.

Dave left Utica when he was in his late teens and finished high school at Saugerties, N.Y., temporarily abandoning his circus ambitions for the more orthodox means of making a livelihood.

towns are called "Tents." They bear the names of distinguished circus performers. Circus Fans here in Utica honored our Hubert Castle in 1942 by organizing a "Tent" called the "Hubert Castle Tent." Needless to say, a large contingent of Hubert's followers were on hand today to applaud their favorite performer. Between shows a dinner party was given in his honor.

Some 30 students of the Mount Carmel Parochial School were Matinee guests of the circus as were 100 patients of the State Hospital, Marcy, N.Y.

Everybody's Good Man Friday, Danny Jacobs, who has been most helpful with his suggestions and advice, informed us as to how the city of Utica got its name. It seems that back in 1789 the village of



Ringling-Barnum midway with big top in background on a rainy day in Chicago, July 18, 1951.

He started in the radio field on Utica's WIBX, later becoming an announcer on WGY, then a news editor in Schenectady. For five years he hit the big time on one of New York's national networks before becoming an actor for the National Broadcasting Company. He returned to the circus field, doing general publicity work in New York. Animal trainer Clyde Beatty recognized his ability and hired Dave as his Publicist and Advance Agent. In 1949 Dave returned to his first love, the Ringling Brothers Circus.

Last winter the popular announcer had his own radio show emanating from Sarasota, Florida. The "Dave Murphy Show" drew rave notices all along Radio Row.

His brother, Jack, is one of Utica's better known golf pros and his wife is the nationally famous Floridian dress designer, Sophie Hodge.

In the Circus Fans Association each state has an organization known as a "Top," whereas the local organizations in the cities and

Fort Schuyler was so rapidly expanding, the townspeople decided that the hamlet should have a new name. After much discussion it was decided by a convivial group gathered in the public room of Bogg's Tavern on April 3, 1789 to let Dame Chance re-name the village. Writing their preference on slips of paper, which were tossed into a hat, the word went around that the village would be called whatever name was written on the first slip drawn out. That decisive slip bore the name "UTICA" and that is how this fair city happened to be named.

Watertown, N.Y.—Thursday, June 21

It was a cool first day of summer that saw huge throngs gather on the grassy Fair Grounds midway. Our reception here was terrific. Both houses were big. At the matinee performance 500 children were guests of the Knights of Columbus, the Shriners and the County Welfare Board.

Circus fever was pitched high for this was our first return to the city where the fabulous Frank W. Woolworth actually started his national known "five and ten cent" stores since 1938. This was the 9th showing of Combined Shows. We previously played Watertown in 1920, 1922, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1931, 1932 and as mentioned, 1938.

The *Watertown Daily Times* wrote spaciouly of our visit stressing the fact that the local advance sale would soar over 12,000 and that both shows would be played to a capacity audience. Another article pointed out the economic factor of the Big Show's local purchasing policy and its financial return to local wholesalers. Beulah Rector's daily column was devoted almost entirely to interesting chatter about Doc Henderson's book, *Circus Doctor*. Incidentally, Doc told us the other day that his publishers report his book as having "a good seasonal sale and a high rating on the Best Seller's List."

"Red" McKittrick, Side Show Manager, announced both performances in the Big Top as Dave Murphy flew to Florida to visit his seriously ill wife.

Syracuse, N.Y.—Friday, June 22

Meachem Field provided a new and much nicer lot. A light rainfall hindered the attendance somewhat for it came just at the time for "doors;" both at one and seven o'clock. Though the matinee was light the evening show was big.

It was our extreme pleasure this afternoon to entertain the Rev. Frank L. Jennings of the Stamford Hill Congregational Church, Stamford Hill, London, England. For the past 30 years Rev. Jennings has worked with and among tramps, gypsies and circus people and at one time served as "padre" for the Circus Fans Association of Great Britain. He is in this country collecting material for two books; *The Road is My Life* and *Sawdust in My Shoes* which he hopes to have published soon. This past fortnight he spent with bums and hoboes in Chicago's "skid row" and New York's Bowery to get the real feel of the American bum. Between shows Rev. Jennings gave a very informative and entertaining lecture in the Big Top. About 50 circus personnel were present. His humorous topic was "Hoboes, Bums, Tramps, Gypsies, Circus People and Fleas."

Rochester, N.Y.—Saturday, June 23

We played on the same Emerson Street lot that we did when we last played here in 1949. This location is about five miles from the main part of town and it may have been this distance that affected the attendance for it was the first time this season that both houses were light. The menagerie was corralled, as of old, between the marquee and the Big Top.

Today Richard J. McGarrity, the show's New York Insurance consultant, bid us farewell. Mr. McGarrity joined the show in Albany and has been with us all through our New York State tour.

Circus Fans Art Haggerty and Bill Milks of Bradford, Pa. and Mr. J. Getchler of Buffalo, N.Y. visited for the day and helped with the proof-reading of this week's journal.

Before we forget it, tomorrow's engagement in Tonawanda has been cancelled because of New York State Sunday blue laws so from here we go to Jamestown, N.Y. tonight and will set-up there tomorrow. . . .

A Capsule Comment on General Circus Conditions

The public continues to give us a warm reception, business has been consistently good. Press, radio and television coverage is excellent—we've practically front-paged our way throughout our tour. And best of all—the COOK HOUSE is better than ever.

Your many nice letters have been received and the sentiments expressed are very much appreciated. If you have any particular phrases of circus life you would like to know a little about or any specific question you may care to have answered, we promise our best to write what you like to read about.

Your nice letters this past week have brought repeated inquiries about our movie, *The Greatest Show on Earth* and its producer, Cecil B. DeMille. Summarizing briefly, we thought we would classify your questions into three groups. It seems that most of you wanted to know a little about DeMille, the man; why he chose the circus as his next Technicolor masterpiece;

and what the movie will be about.

Your correspondent first met the famed movie producer when we celebrated our birthdays together on August 12, 1949 in Madison, Wis. Freddie Franks, one of the principal script writers for *Samson and Delilah*, made the introduction. On that memorable occasion we were photographed together and the press release found its way into the printed pages of the *Milwaukee Journal*.

Fundamentally and perpetually DeMille appears to be a perfectionist. For not alone does he have the impenetrability of a perfectionist's keen mind, but the sagacity of the learned intellect. His wizardry for combining the right words with the right looks give the ring of authenticity to his chain of concise thoughts. And in them are no weak links. DeMille the Dynamic, thinks deliberately, talks deliberately, walks deliberately and acts deliberately. Of sturdy stature he has the unbounding energy of a man a good 20 years younger.



The Alberto Zoppé riding act, Chicago, June 18-22, 1951.

He is a person of decisions—his own decisions. And he wants all his decisions executed with directness and exactitude all of the time. DeMille loves hard work. He must. He surrounds himself with so much of it and with twinkling delight revels in its accomplishment. He expects the same enthusiasm from all who work for and with him.

As we observed the man in our own way we couldn't help admire the great size of the man's greatness. For despite his rugged individualism he radiates a warmth of understanding for his fellow man with a manner of quiet dignity, a social awareness that might have had humility as its teacher. It must be said that he not only won but earned the respect of all of us and if he hadn't been such a successful producer he certainly would have made a hell of a good circus trouper. His kind we welcome in our midst anytime.

Though not primarily interested in doing a history of the circus DeMille visualizes the circus as a truly rich American heritage and seeped in that heritage is the seasoning and flavoring of a world—one world—the circus world—where people of all lands live, work and play together harmoniously in a sort of United Nations. To DeMille the circus is a modern odyssey of people and the lives of people. Of democratic, care-free people who proudly shrug at society's haughty dictates as to what constitutes the right side of living by designating the right side of the railroad tracks. For this modern odyssey is more modern than modern democracy by simply striking a happy medium and living right on the tracks.

Like any artist, DeMille wants to depict this odyssey on a canvas of film capturing the blood, sweat and tears of not only the flesh but the whole body and soul of the Greatest Show on Earth. Perhaps this is why he chose the circus as his next film classic.

As to what the movie will be about, we can only surmise. For in all honesty we must admit that we haven't read the script as yet but we have seen much of the "on-location" shooting in Washington and Philadelphia as we mentioned in our first letter several weeks ago. However, it does appear that the story will be a modern one



Fanny McClosky, left, wife of show manager Frank McClosky, and Kaye Clark on a float used in the *Circus Serenade* spec, Chicago, July 22, 1951.

based on the modern circus of today and will unravel a fascinating super-spectacle showing much of the glamour of the circus and of circus life, loves, hates, jealousies and conflicts of circus people.

It will probably be of Gone-With-The-Windish duration for we understand over 300,000 feet of film have been shot and perhaps not more than 25,000 feet will be used. After its premiere the movie will be road-showed at road-show prices. However, whatever its cost and whatever its duration be sure to see *The Greatest Show on Earth* for it is your correspondent's humble opinion that to see our extravagant "spec"—"Circus Serenade"—in Technicolor that should be worth more than the price of admission.

FLASH: Word has just been received from Hollywood that in the opening commentary of the movie DeMille will give a two minute tribute to "The Spirit of the Circus."

Jamestown, N.Y.—Sunday and Monday, June 24 & 25

After finishing the "put-up" on the Falconer Show Grounds late Sunday afternoon most of us spent a quiet evening in town.

Monday was a pleasant circus day but business was only fair. The night might have been attributed to the fact that there were three local industrial strikes in effect.

Amusing Sign: On the way to the show grounds we noticed a big-lettered billboard that read: "Used Car Dealers Never die—they just trade away."

Some of our best circus friends from Bradford, Pa. came over for the day. Our time was limited but we did manage to have an enjoyable chat this afternoon with Ed Hanley, Cy Thomas, "Sheriff" Fred Ludwig, Mr. and Mrs. Don Bovaird and Mr. and Mrs. All Amrt Johnston and their party of friends. At the night show we had the pleasure of having Mr. and Mrs. Bill Milks and family. Little Billy and Martha had their first look at the Big Top's "tear-down"—and Bill was our mailman delivering last week's journal to our Bradford friends.

Nice people all—only wish we could see more of them. Bradfordites always bring back fond circus memories.



Barber Shop Quartette float used in *Circus Serenade*, Chicago, July 22, 1951.

Don't think we'll ever forget that Fourth of July we spent over there in '49. The whole town turned all out to make sure all of us Ringlingites had a good time. And how we did!!

The Jamestown Shrine Club entertained 300 orphaned children from Randolph Children's Home, the Gustav Adolphus Home and the Gerry Home and others from Chautauqua County at our matinee performance.

The natives here were especially friendly people and we can't thank Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Staver enough for their courtesies in making our publication dead-line.

After "tear-down" we have a five mile haul to the trains and as we stood in a snake-shaped line out in the middle of an empty field waiting for the show bus many of the local "tear-down superintendents"—not knowing the reason for our being there—raised a quizzical eyebrow.

Perhaps it is a strange midnight sight to see several hundred men standing in line in an empty field, or isn't it?

Erie, Pa.—Tuesday, June 26

A crowd that was to later half-fill the Big Top waited on the Peach Street circus grounds midway for doors to open at two o'clock.

Throughout the day many non-descriptive "beards" were noticed and we learned later that the non-shaving edict was in vogue in keeping with Erie's Centennial Celebration which will be climaxed August 15th. At that time a stupendous exhibition of facial blemishes will take place with prizes being awarded to the reddest, grayest, neatest, roughest, and most unique beards.

We had a big house for the night show despite the fact that rain fell heavily just at seven o'clock.

"Count" Nicholas announced the Big Show today and received the plaudits of his many friends and fellow-ushers. The "Count" is well liked and considering this was the first time he was on his own at the Big Top "mike" he turned in a commendable job.

And speaking of announcing, Jay James in his *Erie Times* column struck a nostalgic note when he wrote: "I remember the great voices of the circus—long before the coming of the public address system: The late Lew Graham—throwing his easy-on-the-ears voice to all parts of the big tent, announcing the death-daring acts, including Lillian Lietzel (killed in a fall in a winter circus in Denmark) and the "concert."

"And out in the midway, the late Clyde Ingalls, ballyhooing the side show: 'Do you wish to see Koo-Koo, the Bird Girl? Klikko (sic), the South African Bushman, the man with rubber hair? He was found running wild in the Kalahari desert. Do you wish to see the funny little folk with heads like coconuts? And the famous Doll Family? Miss Daisy Doll, 17 inches of feminine loveliness, etc., etc. See it all in 15 minutes or stay as long as you like. The price? Only

25 cents!' Clyde Ingalls had a voice. Through half a century of rain and shine (without a microphone, too) ever rich and eloquent, electrifying the crowds in the midway of the Big Show! . . ."

Youngstown, Ohio—Wednesday, June 27

Our 110 mile "jump" from Erie was a slow one. Constant railroad switching delayed our arrival and it was getting on to noon time before we started to unload at the runs. It wasn't long before we learned that we had a five mile haul to the show grounds at Meridian and Mahoney Avenues. Local cooperation was lacking in many respects and the snarled traffic slowed our truck movements down to a snail's pace.

The swarming crowd was all over the lot and, in general, in everybody's way. While this hinders the working operation of putting the Big Top up the first impulse is to resent it, but our second sober thought always reminds us that it is in this interest in, and interest for, the circus that makes it a surviving institution.

By the time "doors" were ready to open at four o'clock we noticed our Tax Wagon hadn't arrived so Grace Killian, Edna Antes, Hilda Burkhardt and Tex Copeland set up their pass offices on the midway "a la side-show ticket seller's fashion."

Little Laura Mae and Big Mike Petrillo were entertained by their many hometown friends.

The *Youngstown Vindicator* editorialized: "From time immemorial clowns have been a European institution. They have figured in history as well as in literature, and for centuries kings had their jesters, not simply to amuse them, but to be a sign that even monarchs are not above ridicule. Just last week a great book about clowns and circuses in Czechoslovakia was published. It is called *Umberto's Circus*, and the reviews say of it that even the most nostalgic find 'old Europe' there."

"But now, at least on the other side of the iron curtain, Europe is to know clowns—the kind whose business it is to make people laugh—no more. Not long ago Moscow announced that the clown was 'actively and obstinately

propagated by the bourgeois circus,' and demanded that 'resolute and merciless fight' be waged against such 'cosmopolitan clownery.'

"Within the last day or two word has come that Czechoslovakia and Hungary have followed suit. Hungary will permit circuses, but the program is to be quite different from before. A Budapest newspaper reports that Hungary's traveling circuses 'must be free of the banal bourgeois acts and cosmopolitan clownery' which the *Literary Gazette* has found to be 'counter-revolutionary.'"

The newspaper goes on to say: "The clowns wearing red wigs, giant shoes, and loose dresses who stultified the people with their hackneyed and stupid anecdotes, will disappear."

"Instead of that, new humorist artists will perform. These new artists will take the center ring and recited instructive chashtushkas



The great clown Otto Griebing sitting on a spec float, Minneapolis, July 27, 1951.



Two strings of flats on Illinois Central tracks just across the highway from the lake front lot in Chicago, July 22, 1951. Note spare center pole on left front flat and chalk blocks scattered throughout the cars.

Pittsburgh, Pa.—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, June 28, 29 & 30

Our train arrived in Carnegie toward noon-time and we had a three mile haul to the Heidelberg Raceway where we found a circus lot that was on a rocky base. Here, circus men of many years experience saw, for the first time, two surgical experiments being performed on the vital parts of the Big Top's anatomy.

One was that since stakes couldn't be driven into the hard rock it was necessary to use a "cat" as a counter-balance to raise and hold the number one center pole in place. When we first saw the Big Top canvas being laced over the "cat" our first impression was that of a doctor performing an operation and then sewing up his scissors.

The other operation that many of us have never seen before was that of using an air-compressed jack-hammer to drill holes in the ground that would make it possible to drive steel stakes which are necessary for the Big Top riggings.

Again "doors" didn't open until four o'clock and the show didn't get underway until four-thirty. Many observers agreed that the matinee was the smallest of the season. Heidelberg is about three miles from Carnegie and about ten miles from down town Pittsburgh.

F.A. "Babe" Boudinot, show's General Agent, out of our Chicago office, visited for a three day business conference.

For the 21st consecutive year "Sech" Hawkins entertained 80

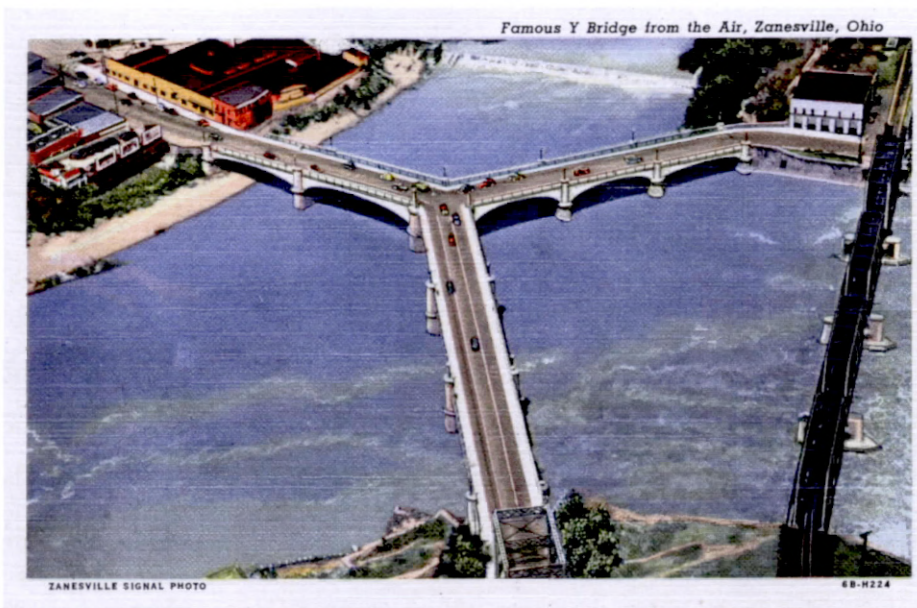
(Russian four-line verses) which are on daily problems and are of a constructive character; the fight against the kulaks, the economic plan, etc.

"Czechoslovakia is also 'reforming' the circus. Its clowns, also, are not too funny, but instructive. The circus must mend its ways. There must be no more sword-swallowers or fire-eaters. The new Soviet Midway must educate, rather than entertain or horrify the patrons. Other exhibits must be designed not to strike children dumb with astonishment, but to stir in them hatred of 'the enemy'—the United States.

"So Youngstowners who have the good fortune to see that old American favorite, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's circus today, may congratulate themselves that they are in a country where clowns are still permitted to be funny and people still have the right to laugh at what strikes them as comic or outlandish, instead of living in constant terror in a Communist land where nothing is allowed to be funny and laughter is forbidden."

Think, my friends, this is worth re-reading!!!

As Broadway columnist Earl Wilson might report: The surrounding Youngstown steel mills with their open hearths going full-blast gave the wet sky an illumination as though powerful arc lights were cameraing the light glimmers of the diamond-like dribblets. And as we unlaced the soft and dampened Big Top canvas it felt like a nylon brassiere that wasn't hanging from a backyard clothes line.



O'Neill sent his subscribers this postcard of the famous Y Bridge in Zanesville, Ohio. It still stands.

young people from the Boys and Girls Club of the *Pittsburgh Press* at our opening matinee.

Circus Fans Mrs. S. J. Dunn of Point Breeze, Pa. dropped by to say "hello" and we recalled pleasant memories of the fans National Convention in Washington. Mrs. Dunn has a pine-paneled room in her home called the Circus Room. The room is decorated with bright red curtains imprinted with elephants, giraffes and monkeys, circus style. The walls are covered with pictures of circus greats and on the table is a scrapbook of Mrs. Dunn's souvenirs and letters from all her circus friends. An oil painting of Ella Bradna, one of the greatest equestrians of the circus, hangs above her desk. And might we add Mrs. Dunn always serves circus lemonade—specializing in a "spiked" variety.

Karl Krug, drama critic of the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*, reviewed our opening and wrote: "In this wondrous, yet awesome, era of mechanized entertainment, the Big Show still has its heart in the sentiments of yesterday and its head in a blaze of modern splendor as full of color and pulchritude as a current Broadway musical hit. Now, more than ever before the girl-and-pageant spectacles fill the arena with lavish and fantastic abandon."

To say the least our three day engagement here left much to be desired in the way of attendance—a late arrival; hot weather; a professional golf tournament; a fireman's convention and parade and the location of the circus lot in relation to the concentrated population of Pittsburgh proper were factors in keeping the customers away.

From July 1 to July 8—Zanesville, Ohio to Columbus, Ohio

Dear Circus Friends: The response we have received from you about Your Weekly Circus Letter has been more than gratifying. In a matter of a few weeks your requests for it have increased from a few to a few hundred and more requests are still coming in from all over the country. If time and space permitted we would like to thank you, each and every one, individually. But the show must go on—work must be done, consequently, our time is limited and we hope you will understand. This in part is only a few of the sentiments, of what some of you are saying about our efforts.

"Thank you very much for the very clever reports on the activities of the Big Show. I enjoy reading them very much. I have learned a great deal about the activities since I saw you in Washington." Karl Kae Knecht, President of the Circus Fans Association. "It is something very special, I'd say, to have an opportunity to read of the circus in the way you express it. Your stories are going forward to two other women (Circus Fans) in Iowa." Florence Kinney, Des Moines, Iowa.

"Your epistle is a work of art." Aline Burnette, Miami, Florida.

"Thank you very much for the informative bulletin." Melvin D. Hildreth, Ex-President of the Circus Fans Association. . . .

With pardonable pride we feel truly honored and with a very grateful heart we promise to try harder to merit such praise and want to say to all of you—THANKS, thanks very much for all your nice thoughts.

Zanesville, Ohio—Sunday and Monday, July 1 & 2

On our way to the circus grounds we crossed the Muskingum River Canal on the only "Y" bridge in the United States. Since this was our first showing here in ten years it was the first time many of us had seen the famous bridge.

At the Fair Grounds we set up in the thickly-sodded infield of the oval race-track with a large church-like group of spectators watching the proceedings in a pew-like fashion from the seats of the grandstand. From high atop the grandstand the blue-topped Big Top looked like a blue cameo set in the sunbaked clay-browned racetrack mounting.

Sunday afternoon and evening was a quiet one—the local movies provided most of the entertainment.

Monday was a beautiful day, but the business wasn't up to par. We were impressed with the friendly, down-to-earthiness of the polite and courteous townspeople. That atmosphere seemed to prevail everywhere for in its simplicity of manner it was noted that in the local newspaper, *The Times Recorder*—the circus article had the notation "turn to Page 11, PLEASE" and the local bus requested less emphatically and more politely, "Please Do Not Smoke" instead of the usual dictatorial "No Smoking" sign that almost glares at you in busses everywhere.

It was our esteemed pleasure to have a neighborly chat with Frank Shurtz—a kindly and hospitable man. Frank has been the same corner druggist for the past 30 years and has looked forward to our coming for some time. Needless to say he was among those who stayed to see the last piece of canvas being rolled. (We might add, too, that we thought of this week's

postcard idea while talking to him. When we first stepped in his drug store and told him we were with the circus he insisted that we take the card with his compliments. This kindly act later developed into our purchasing over 300 "Y" Bridge cards to send to you.)

Note to Clown Buzzie Potts: The Buzzie Potts Ring of the Circus Model Builders is holding a Big Lot gathering for four days—July 1-2-3 and 4 at New Bedford, Mass. A big parade will feature 5 circus wagons, 11 pairs of draft horses, 80 saddle stock, 2 bands, 20 clowns, one bugle drum corps and will feature one of the largest displays of circus models ever exhibited under one tent.

Our good friend Bill Milks of Bradford, Pa. sent us an article this past week on the Masters of Pantomime. Sorry, we can't quote the source, but we did learn that Dan Rice, one of America's all-time great clowns, received as much as \$1,000 a week as far back as 1860 (sic). His clown trade-mark was symbolic of modern Uncle Sam of today.



Mary Jane Miller in Circus Serenade spec wardrobe, Winona, Minnesota, July 26, 1951.

Parkersburg, West Virginia—Tuesday, July 3

It has been 20 years since we last played here and the attendance for the day was good considering the hot weather. As the huge crowd waited on the Stephenson Field midway for "doors" to open we heard "Red" McKittrick give his sideshow Doll Family pitch to the assembled thousands and thought by the time this season is over Harry Doll, sideshow attraction billed as the World's Smallest Man will be introduced in DeMille's newest circus movie, *The Greatest Show on Earth*.

Ben Davenport, former general manager of Dailey Bros. Circus and now owner of the Campa Bros. Circus, was a matinee guest with a party of friends.

The *Parkersburg News and Sentinel* gave a circus party today for 400 of their newspaper family.

Huntington, West Virginia—Wednesday, July 4

The day's intermittent rains dampened the holiday circus spirits of the local citizenry otherwise we would have probably played to two turn away houses. A courageous but swarming crowd took every possible inch of cover as the torrential rain fell heavily before "doors" opened at three o'clock. A 121 mile rail jump from Parkersburg delayed our arrival. The matinee show didn't get under way until 3:40 p.m.

Our former Chief of Police, John Brice, visited for the day from nearby Ironton, Ohio. Despite his seventy-plus years, the Chief is looking well and happy and we more than enjoyed reminiscing with him. Almost detected a home-sick and longing look in his especially bright eyes, too, as we wandered around the midway. Though we can't prove it factually, we wouldn't be surprised that "old John" and Bill Reynolds, our present chief, are honorary members of more police forces throughout the country than any other two men alive.

Today the entire area surrounding the Big Top was a black, churned sea of mud and definitely of the gooeey type. The mud underfoot made it so bad Dr. Scotty Horsburgh was seen hauling

some 19 ushers in his special sanitation truck to the cook house for that very special and scrumptious 4th of July fried chicken dinner. If you are interested, George Blood fixed almost one thousand delicious pounds of it and it was devoured ravishingly.

Midway Mud Scene: The young lady was standing in line to buy tickets. With quickened step in the heavy mud the straps on her sandals broke. With complete nonchalance she stepped out of them and continued on to the window to purchase her tickets. Those behind her continued to move up in their turn and as they did hesitated in humorous homage to the mud-drowned shoes and laughingly went their way.

During the evenings' "spec" number *Circus Serenade*, U.S. Marines from the Huntington Recruiting Office presented a historical sketch wearing the uniforms of a particular period of Marine history. The sketch showing the uniforms worn by the Marines in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War of 1846 and the present-day Marine "Blues"—received a rousing ovation as it circled the entire Big Top arena.

Felix Adler and Frankie Saluto appeared at Camp Limp-A-Little, a camp for crippled children near Huntington, and delighted the youngsters with their clown antics.

Record Book Researching: Looking back over the years since the Big Show combined this is where we exhibited on the 4th of July holiday date: 1951, Huntington, W.Va.; 1950, Toronto, Canada; 1949, Bradford, Pa.; 1948, Enroute—Springfield, Mass. to Albany, N.Y.; 1947, Binghamton, N.Y.; 1946, Springfield, Ohio; 1945, Reading, Pa.; 1944, Providence, R.I.; 1943, Enroute—Reading, Pa. to Allentown, Pa.; 1942, Waterbury, Conn.; 1941, New Bedford, Mass.; 1940, Rochester, N.Y.; 1939, New Bedford, Mass.; 1937, Buffalo, N.Y.; 1936, Bradford, Pa.; 1935, Fitchburg, Mass.; 1934, Bradford, Pa.; 1933, Pittsburgh, Pa.; 1932, Utica, N.Y.; 1931, Springfield, Mass.; 1930, Manchester, N.H.; 1929, Bridgeport, Conn.; 1928, Kitchener, Canada; 1927, Wheeling, W.Va.; 1926, Enroute—Youngstown, Ohio to Akron, Ohio; 1925, Kitchener, Canada; 1924, Huntington, W.Va.; 1923, Springfield, Mass.; 1922, Montreal, Canada; 1921, Pittsfield, Mass.; 1920, Enroute—Stamford, Conn. to Bridgeport, Conn.; 1919, Harrisburg, Pa.

Charleston, West Virginia—Thursday, July 5

We unloaded at St. Albans and had a six mile haul to the Dunbar Fair Grounds. It was winding, two-lane and heavily trafficked road that led to the show grounds. Our truck movements were impeded but super efficiency was shown by all hands and the show was on time as schedule. The day's business was good considering that our location was 12 miles from downtown Charleston. We last showed here in 1931.

At the matinee performance the *Charleston Daily Mail* entertained 50 members of their newspaper family and 100 orphan children from the Davis House Shelter were guests of the circus.



Performer Norma Wright from nearby Hammond, Indiana, takes her little brother and sisters to the novelty stand on the midway at Chicago on July 21, 1951.

Between shows we had our belated Fourth of July Party. Vice-President, Henry "Buddy" North distributed prizes for the various events which were officiated by Manager Frank McClosky and Assistant Manager W.E. Lawson. "Count" Nicholas handled the MCing "mike" chores. Almost the entire personnel turned out for the annual affair.

Lest We Forget: Today was the natal day of P.T. Barnum. The Master Showman was born in Bethel, Conn., July 5, 1810.

TENTative Plans: Sverre Braathen writes that the Big One will be in Madison, Wisconsin July 25th and Florence Kinney pens that Des Moines, Iowa plays host to the Greatest Show on Earth July 31st.

Portsmouth, Ohio—Friday, July 6

About four o'clock this morning Harold Mathews of our cookhouse staff quietly passed on to the Great Lot. Harold's death was caused by a sudden heart attack.

Nestled against the back lot's cookhouse was man-made, fifty foot high dike atop which quite a few of us relaxed between shows. As we looked across the swift-flowing muddy Ohio waters the Kentucky skyline was picturesquely framed with rolling hills that looked like a giant green roller-coaster chiseled by nature's own unsteady hand. The one-ferry stop town of Fullerton, Kentucky slept serenely at the foot of all this natural grandeur.

The juvenile set of our circus family found a playful haven in the pair of constantly occupied swings that were permanent fixtures of the adjacent Naval Training Center.

Pardon our parenthesis, but: "Today Hollywood" gossipist Louella Parsons in her nationally syndicated column chronicled: "Cornel (He's terrific as the trapeze star in *The Greatest Show on Earth*) Wilde and Jean (She's really Beautiful with a capital C for Class) Wallace are in love but they've set no definite marriage date," and Ida Jean Kain, another syndicated columnist, devoted her entire column to Betty Hutton and her secrets for keeping trim—mentioning too that Betty is also starring in our new circus movie.

Unless our Portsmouth record book slip is showing, this is the first time the Combined Shows have played here.



Fay Romig on ménage horse, about to enter tent for Circus Serenade spec, Chicago, July 20, 1951.

Columbus, Ohio—Saturday and Sunday, July 7 & 8

An adequate Mound Street circus lot drew a fair attendance for our two day showing. The weather was extremely hot.

The *Columbus Evening Dispatch* carried several large circus cartoons on their editorial page and columned there: "The height of the Summer season would fail of its furthest possibilities if the circus did not come to town. Columbus has grown up these days, so the circus comes for a two-day rather than a one-day stand in these parts. The longer visit is a tribute to our bigness.

"Trite, but true, is the statement that as far as the circus is concerned there are as many youngsters past the age of voting as there are under it. In fact, if it weren't for father's retention of his boyish enthusiasm for the big top, the elephants, the lions, the trapeze artists, all the rest that go into making up the fast-moving, dazzling circus the youngsters might miss a great thrill in their lives.

"The arrival of the circus is always a reminder that the old and the new in this life are pretty well tied together by tradition which holdover from the one period to another. The circus is of another day, to be sure, but it is of today also. It continues, as do many traditions which go to make a continuity in living."

Paul Jung, Prince Paul, Harry Horth and Myron Orton appeared in person and in full clown costume at Morehouse Fashion's Saturday morning television party.

For your scrapbook: Both the *New York Mirror* and *News*—Sunday edition—carried a double center spread of colored shots of DeMille's filming *The Greatest Show on Earth*. They're terrific!

Next week-end—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday we play in Detroit and the following week-end from the 18th to the 22nd we show in Chicago.



A Ringling-Barnum stock car rests on the Chicago and Northwestern tracks on July 23 while an Amusement Corporation of America Carnival train passes through Milwaukee.

From July 9 to July 15—Dayton, Ohio to Detroit, Michigan

Dear Circus Friends: In the short space of 15 weeks we've played in 38 cities galloping through 12 states. The Greatest Show on Earth has now travelled over 5000 miles as we continue on our tented tour of America.

Dayton, Ohio—Monday, July 9

We made good time coming from Columbus, arriving here about 8:00 a.m. The Fair Grounds was less than a mile from the "runs" so we were ready for the light matinee turnout at one o'clock.

Our lot was just like the one we had at the Zanesville Fair Grounds—clean and grassy—and in the infield of the race track. The day was hot; the night mucky. [The National Cash] Register Company fenced off the back yard. Of its 14,000 employees, 13,999 were gaping adenoidally all day from all window ledges like thousands of ants on the top edge of a molasses can as the tented



Rose Wong, half-Chinese, half-Norwegian performer, on right, and an unknown performer show off fancy costumes for Circus Serenade spectacle at Winona, Minnesota on July 26, 1951.

city mushroomed into existence. The missing odd one, the boss, was seen later peering intently from between the shuttered Venetian blinds with field glasses in hand. (It was rumored around the lot that his secretary didn't even have to take a letter and he thought our show girls very attractive.)

Many of the natives here consider Dayton the birth-place of aviation, for the first experiments in aviation, made by Orville and Wilbur Wright in Dayton, led directly to the first aeroplane flight December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, N.C. by the famous brothers. Orville Wright's home today is one of Dayton's noted shrines.

Before we forget it: Last night in Columbus as we were standing in line after tear down waiting for the show bus to take us back to the coaches, we were standing next to Tom Pence, a veteran trouper of 50 some seasons, and during the course of our conversation Tom told us that Adam Forepaugh, of circus owning fame; Al G. Fields, famous minstrel man; Chick Bell, one time head ticket seller around the show and Stanley Dawson, Chick's assistant, were all buried in

the cemetery that was less than a hundred yards from where the Big Top had been. [Pence was confused. While Fields, Bell, and Dawson are indeed buried in Green Lawn Cemetery adjacent to the show lot, Forepaugh is buried in Philadelphia. He was thinking of Peter and Lewis Sells, both of whom are buried at Green Lawn, as is magician Howard Thurston.] Tom recalled the days too when Merle Evans and a group of his musicians would go over to the cemetery between shows and blow Taps over Chick's grave. We can only say from what we have heard that he must have been a terrific man.

Today we learned that there are 19,797 theaters in the United States and by the time our new circus movie *The Greatest Show on Earth* gets around to playing all of them, more than a few million new circus friends will have found out what a great institution the circus really is.

Today the *Journal Herald's* A. S. Kany devoted much of his daily column "Let's Go to Pieces" to covering the Greatest Show on Earth.

Two weeks ago we quoted an editorial about the Russian attitude on circuses in general and on clowns in particular. The *Dayton*

Daily Mail echoed editorially on the same subject today commenting that European children will probably feel the same way American kids would if clowns were replaced by school teachers reading the Congressional Record.

Advance Fashion Notice: The distaff side of our circus fans and friends might be interested to know that today we read in the local papers about the "No-Rump-Wrinkle" skirt—this new fashion in ladies attire gives the illusion of taking three inches off the derriere, but the designer puts crinoline petticoats underneath to add at least six inches.

Gentlemen, you learn many things traveling around the country.

Most of the personnel of the Tom Pack's show spent the day visiting with us. Hugo Schmidt, Rose Behee, Franklin and Astrid were a few of the ex-Ringlingites with whom we exchanged greetings.

The night's house was big.

Lima, Ohio—Tuesday, July 10

A scorching, sultry day greeted us as we made our way to the Fair Grounds' clean and grassy lot. The extremely hot weather accounted in large part for the small matinee crowd.

The Lima Elks Lodge #54 gave a circus party this afternoon for 50 orphan children of the Allen County

Shelter Home.

Tommy O'Hara, Advance Ticket Agent, has joined the inside ticket sellers for an indefinite period.

The general conversation around the lot this afternoon concerned itself with the All-Star ball game being played in Detroit. Maximum use was made of all available radios as interested groups listened intently to the play-by-play description. Avid American League fans were laying 7 to 5 odds.

The Lima Locomotive Works located here is known the world over for all types of steam locomotives and Diesel equipment.

At ten-thirty tonight we made a taped recording of our experience as a circus correspondent over Lima's Radio Station WIMA. Announcer Pete Newland did the interviewing.

Thanks to Karl Kae Knecht for his sending us a copy of the Circus Fans *White Tops* for today we did find time to show the pictures it contained to many of our personnel. Needless to say, everyone got a big bang out of it. Clown Otto Griebeling made the cover page.

Toledo, Ohio—Wednesday and Thursday, July 11 & 12
Word Paintings While Strolling Around the Stickney
Avenue Show Grounds Art Gallery.

Portrait of a Press Agent in Action: "Frank Braden is one of the country's best known circus press agents who always is welcome in the city room of a newspaper. Frank has been in Toledo this week ballyhooing the Greatest Show on Earth, and it was by coincidence that one of his famous stunts was pictured in the *Blade* Pictorial last Sunday. It was the photograph of a midget, Lya Graf, sitting on the knee of financier J.P. Morgan. . . . The Ringling Circus was showing in Washington in 1933 at the same time a congressional hearing was in session. Mr. Morgan had been called as a witness. . . . Mr. Braden cooked up the idea of taking the midget to the hearing, hoping at least to introduce her to the great Morgan. At a brief recess, Mr. Morgan and the midget met and shook hands, with Mr. Braden, his assistants and photographers close by. A moment later one of Frank's aids placed the midget on the financier's knee and the picture that was published world-wide was snapped." Fred L. Mollenkoff in the *Toledo Blade*.

Portrait of a rarity: "Today's *Toledo Blade* pictured the rare black calf born of English Park Cattle, a breed is supposed to be almost white since pre-Roman days. This rarity occurred recently at the Washington, D.C. Zoo, whose director is Dr. William Mann, a real circus fan. The Circus Fans Association at their National Convention last June, conferred the honorary degree of 'D.Z.' (Doctor of Zoos) upon the internationally known zoologist."

Portrait of an elephant: "An elephant is an animal occurring in one of three colors, depending on whether you're on a safari, a church committee, or a weekend party." Mitch Woodbury in the *Toledo Blade*.

Portrait of a smile: "As painstakingly as Clown Arthur Burslem hanging up his freshly washed clothes."

Portrait of accomplishment: "Same Clown taking his laundry down."

"Coincidence," a portrait by Wallace Love: "Genial Gene Lynch, Yellow Wagon Ticket Seller, was approached by a local Toledian Miss who had purchased her tickets at our downtown advance sale, and wishing to hold on to her choice seats yet purchase another one which would keep her party together, queried Gene as to whom she could see about her little problem. 'Do you know Gene Lynch?' our ducat disburser kiddingly asked. 'Yes,' the young lady replied, 'I'm trying to get the extra ticket for her. She's sitting in the car!' And the next few minutes were spent in introducing Miss Jean Lynch of Toledo, to our jovial O. Eugene Lynch who graciously exchanged the tickets."

Portrait of Thursday's Early Afternoon Rain: It was a light, fine rain that seemed to float to the ground. It was too lazy to fall. All the angels in heaven must have taken over with pin-pointed eye-droppers filled with the lazy fluid. If sugar is said to be granulated; milk homogenized; then this rainfall must be classified as concentrated dew.

Portrait of two famous circus fans: "*Life* magazine's recent life-story of Tallulah Bankhead and *Collier's* article on Jimmy Durante. Did you know that both are avid circus fans and that they hold membership cards in the Circus Fans Association? Tallulah is a member of the I. A. Van Amburgh Top #27, New York, and Jimmy belongs to the James A. Bailey Top #9, California."

Portrait of a busy man: "We noticed Bones Brown working with the train crew tonight as we returned from the lot. When we stopped to think of it, Bones, besides being a featured trapeze flyer, is a program seller, a rigger, a general utility repair man, a cat driver for the tear-down operation and hook rope man on the train crew. He is married and his wife and three children make their home in New Orleans, La. When we queried him on what he does in his spare time, he replied thoughtfully, 'What spare time?'"

Portrait of Toledo attendance: "In four performances, twice as many empty seats saw the show as did people."

Portrait of a name: "Little Pine Tree of Gold" is the literal translation of trapeze star Pinito Del Oro's Spanish name.

And speaking of name—Czeslaw Mroczkowski is now legally Charles Moroski, which also changes Gena Lipowska's name to Mrs. Charles Moroski. The modern circus has little relation to the Roman name from which it was derived—it means a building for



Emma Castro, left, and Bobby Dubrueil model aerial ballet wardrobe in Chicago on July 20, 1951.

the exhibition of horse and chariot races and other amusements. The name of the youngest member of our circus family is the Riding Zoppés' little nine months' old son, Albertino—the name of one of our oldest Ringlingite's is "Ole Grease" who few know as Charles Mitchell—and a still fewer besides our mailman, Udo Kirka, know the baptismal name of Mabel, Possum, Blocks Holy Water, Coast-to-Coast, Whitey, China, Band-top Maxie, The Deacon, Gu-Gu, and Chicken Charlie. Clown Buzzie Potts signs the name Delbert Rhamy on his weekly paychecks. Brother Tom, before he came around the circus was Thomas Pomanondus Cornelius O'Neill—named Putt for short. The Greatest Show On Earth has been a name before the public for 81 consecutive years, and Paramount Pictures paid several hundred thousand dollars to use the name as the title for Cecil B. DeMille's new four million dollar movie. Every little water bucket around the lot has a name on it—water buckets are not trained to walk as most people think, but if you get caught teaching one they call you an awful name.

Detroit, Michigan—Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 12, 14 & 15

Our lot here was practically the same one we played on in 1947. Many of us recalled at that time we played at Michigan and Wyoming Avenues for three days (July 25th, 26th, and 27th) then moved over town only ten miles away to play the 28th, 29th, and 30th at Oak and 6 Mile Road. There was some question as to whether this was a "railroad lot." The cook-house was a stone's throw away from the flat cars, but the Big Top was a good half-mile down Wyoming Ave. However, there wasn't any question about it being a tight lot.

The huge De Soto automobile plant was directly across the street from the midway with the Big Top running almost parallel to it. During the day Merle Evans' band's music was enjoyed by the assembly line workers.

Much to everyone's surprise a new white wardrobe top blossomed forth in the backyard.

At the opening matinee several hundred children with Red Cross sponsorship were guests of the circus.

Attendance was hit hard by the local auto layoffs due to steel shortages, big league ball games, soaring thermometers with almost 90 degree readings, and Detroit's 150th Anniversary Festival which opened to a 15,000 audience Friday night. Incidentally, this festival, City of Freedom, has a cast of 1,200 and will run for 11 days. It depicts Detroit's 250 year history starting with the city being discovered, the slave period, the industrial revolution, the depression and the last great war portrayed in song, dance and dialogue. 20 original songs for it were written by a priest.

Both the *Detroit Times* and the *Detroit Free Press* reviewed the Greatest Show on Earth in the Saturday editions.

Reviewing our \$360,000 costumed spec *Circus Serenade* which is programmed as a stupendous new musical super-spectacle of 1951, glorifying in stirring pageantry, whimsical fantasy and processional

splendor the songs that uplift the heart of mankind, they wrote: "John Ringling North's personal project is an extravaganza of lavishly decorated floats, scantily but prettily costumed women and a varied assortment of clowns and animals all cavorting to the music of the theme tune 'Sing a Happy Song'."

"It does, however, raise the question of just who the circus is trying to entertain; the kids or their fathers. Judging from Bikini-styled costumes used throughout the circus, it might be safe to guess that the fathers would beat out their youngsters in an ogling contest." Jack Theissen in the *Times*.

"With all its traditional pageantry and color, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey show opened a three-day stand in Detroit. A Circus highlight is the parade of gaily costumed performers, clowns, animals and floats. Marching in this spectacle are Dumbo, the Three Little Pigs, Mickey Mouse, Alice in Wonderland, the Mad Hatter and other storybook characters." Geoffrey Howes, *Free Press* staff writer.

Circus Every Day: Capitol Records in advertising their new album of tanbark tunes by Merle Evans and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus band are giving away FREE circus band-and-show sheets that tells you what is going on in the ring as the music changes. With these Capitol records you're at the circus every day. Write Capitol Records, Inc., Box 2391, Hollywood 28, California.

An old family relationship was celebrated here when Father John Enright of the University of Detroit visited his cousin Bill Sweeney, one of our ticket sellers. It had been close to 40 years since they last saw one another. Father John F. Connor joined in the pleasant reunion.

We're all looking forward to that big five-day vacation in Chicago next weekend, and if you come around looking you'll find us out on the lot next to Soldier's Field. BW

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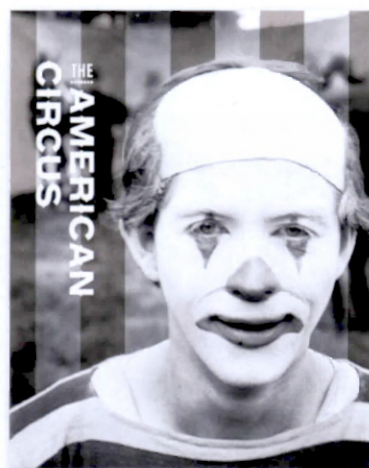
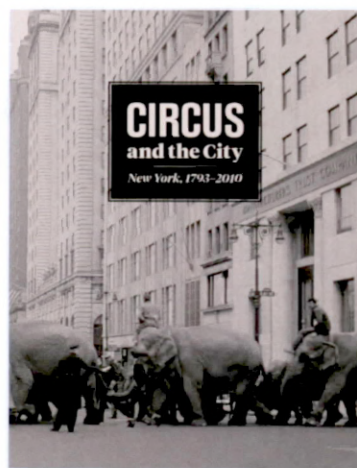
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Culture



Seminar on the Flying Trapeze

The highlight of the 2010 Circus Historical Society Convention in Bloomington, Illinois was a panel discussion of the flying trapeze and later an actual demonstration of flying by some of the ultimate practitioners of the art. The July 24 seminar, the transcription of which follows, was one of the greatest assemblage of trapeze talent ever in one place.

The participants were Steve Gossard (SG), the leading authority on flying trapeze history; Terry Cavaretta (TC), the first woman to consistently complete the triple somersault; Richie Gaona (RG), long-time member of the Flying Gaonas troupe; Al Light (AL), at the time director of Illinois State University's Gamma Phi Circus and now head coach on Ka, Cirque du Soleil's show at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas; Miguel Vazquez (MV), the first person to complete the impossible quadruple somersault on the trapeze; Tony Steele (TS), the first person to do the three-and-a-half somersault and mentor to the Vazquez family and Al Light; and Juan Vazquez (JV), the catcher for the Flying Vazquez troupe. Comments from the audience are identified as (Q). Thanks to Kate Browne for transcribing the text from an audio recording.

Those wishing to learn more about the flying trapeze are directed to *A Reckless Era of Aerial Performance, the Evolution of Trapeze* by Steve Gossard, *Born to Fly The Story of Tito Gaona* by Tito Gaona with Harry L. Graham, and *The Biggest Trick* by Juan Vazquez and Harry L. Graham. Miguel Vazquez and the quadruple somersault are the subjects of Philip Weyland's upcoming documentary *The Last Great Flyer*.



Murderers' Row at the 2010 CHS convention. Left to right, Richie Gaona, Tony Steele, Juan Vazquez, Terry Cavaretta, and Miguel Vazquez. Mark Schmitt photo. ©Philip Weyland.

SG: Imagine people practicing the most perfect physical discipline. The classic flying return act is the near perfect form of performance; it's concise, self-contained, smooth, and in one fluid motion. While I have a lot of respect for the new acts that incorporate the Russian swing and stationary cradle, I think they're sensational, but there's just never going to be anything quite like the flying return act. It was invented in the 1870s and it's still around today. It requires cooperation, timing, superb physical conditioning, discipline, and the grace and poise of a bird. And it also requires showmanship and perfect self-assurance. Imagine the perfect performance, then imagine the very best of the extraordinary people who do it. And that's what we have with us today.

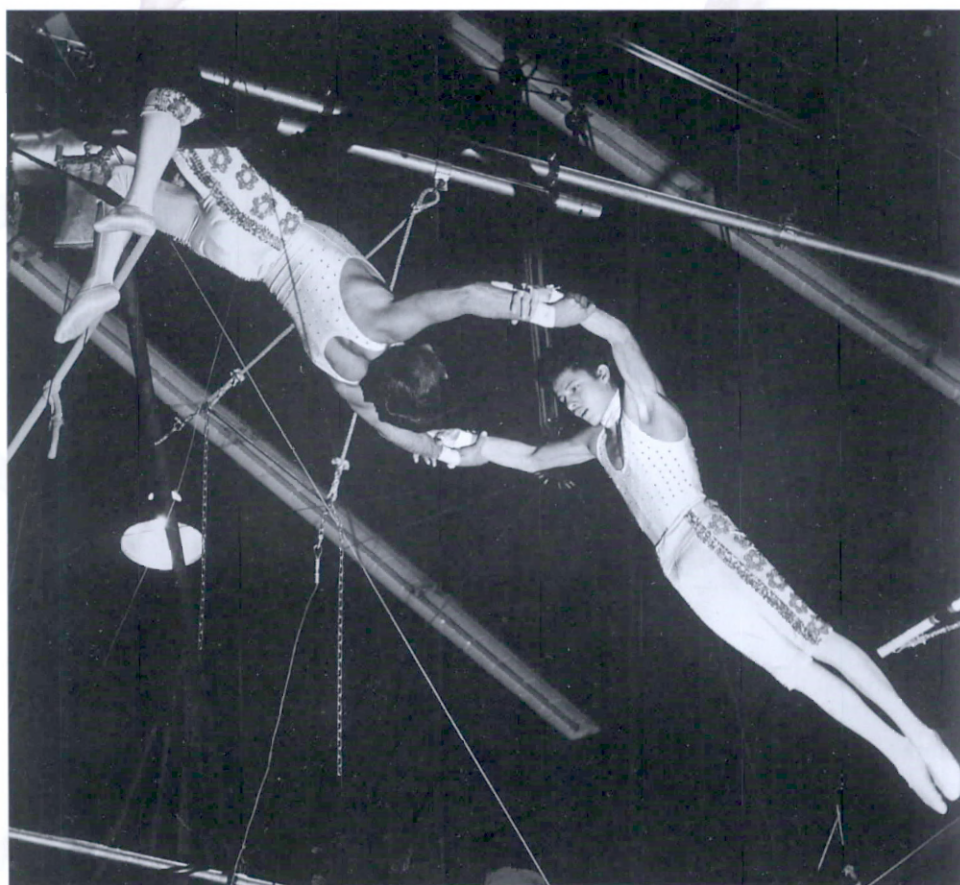
I have a couple questions that Harry Graham [biographer of Tito Gaona and Juan Vazquez] sent. He would've liked to been here. He's in an assisted living home in Florida and he's had some problems and couldn't make it. He wanted to know about the risks that flyers take. Just some general comments from anyone on the panel. Specific instances, injuries and so on. Like in Terry's [Cavaretta] talk yesterday she talked about how her mother broke her neck a couple times. Does anyone want to start with that? It's kind of a loaded question I know.

TC: I think the most problems that flyers have are usually in their shoulders. The doctors compare them to the same kind of shoulders that pitchers get. I have a pin in my shoulder but there's a lot of risk. I mean, one time I came off the bar early and knocked my brother unconscious. I knocked him crooked so when he was unconscious his legs came out of the catch trap and he hit the ridge rope and landed on the ground and had eighteen fractures.

SG: Ooh.

TC: So that was probably the worst thing

Juan Vazquez catches brother Miguel in this 1981 Ringling-Barnum publicity photo. It was the Flying Vazquez first season with the Greatest Show on Earth.





The Flying Vazquez about 1982. Left to right, Felipe Vazquez, Juan Vazquez, Patricia Vazquez, and Miguel Vazquez. Circus World Museum photo.

that happened to us.

RG: The rigging can be a problem sometimes. I had a shackle break, or come apart actually, right in the middle of a show. And right when you break it, you know, it's one of the most—all the forces. Right when it broke, the trapeze came off the shackle. I ended up I think past the catcher. Luckily I let go and landed in the net. That was one of the worst things that ever happened to me.

MV: There's a lot of talking about—a lot of people have a misconception. Oh, they have a net.

RG: Yeah.

MV: But the worst had to be if you didn't hit it just right or you got lost in the air in a trick.

RG: That's the worst.

MV: You can hit your head. Break your neck. Break your arm. And then it's going to bounce you off who knows where. So that's one of the biggest misconceptions. The so-called safety net. It's there for safety but sometimes, you know, it could really hurt you. When you start doing big tricks there's a lot of height, you know, revolutions, speed, and distance. There's so much dynamics. Things don't go according to what you planned. It gets pretty ugly and like what Terry said. We heard a lot of stories; people have actually died from that. From doing tricks, triples in flying trapeze it's very dangerous. We take that risk but we don't think about that. When you're up there performing you have to concentrate on what you have to do and overcoming. At least that's my experience.

RG: That's true. You don't think about it. You know, you perform for the audience. Until it happens then you think about it. Until then, it really doesn't come into mind. You get nervous opening nights and stuff like that, but you know, you always want to perform and do well for the audience. That's where the nerves come in.

MV: Safety net, mechanic, you know, it's all there to protect you. Gonna go back to Julio Farias [who was killed in practice].

RG: Yes.

MV: We were practicing the three and a half. Tuscon, Arizona. They had the mechanic on to try the three and a half. Somehow during the show, the mechanic got tangled on one line. It snapped—flew out of the net and the other one broke. So he got onto the floor and he got killed. So he had the net, he had the mechanic, and he got killed. So, you know, there's those things but they don't necessarily prevent damage.

TS: I don't even know what the question was.

SG: The question was talking about risks and how you manage risks is basically the question?

TS: That's easy to answer. Always. If you're in the flying trapeze business you're always pushing the envelope. 'Cause otherwise life is a drag.

AL: I haven't had too many really bad experiences. I was kicked out a catch bar, but I landed in the net so I was okay.

SG: Well, I have thought that we all have a guardian angel but we also have an imp from hell that follows us around. I blame him for all the little things that snag me up from day to day, but I'm thinking in performance and my limited experience in performing myself I have noticed that some days everything clicks and goes exactly how you want it to and other days nothing goes right. Do you have any observations on that or explanations for that? Have you ever thought about that?

MV: After many years performing you learn to overcome and compensate for situations when you just don't feel right. Sometimes you go out there and you feel like a little feather and sometimes you feel like a ton of bricks. So that's when you have to compensate. That's what makes you a great flyer. There's good flyers, and there's great flyers. And the great flyers are the ones who can go about the circumstances that you're feeling, you know, sometimes when you travel rigging changes. The lighting changes. The building changes. And it's a lot of things to change and you have to learn those things and overcome every situation. That's how you become consistent. You have a consistency, you know. Obviously every day you don't feel the same, but if you—

SG: Do you think it's a matter of character?

MV: I believe it's a matter of character. Of course, you have to be in physically good shape. There's only so much you can do through your mind;



Rosa and Miguel Vazquez while performing at Circus Circus Casino in Las Vegas in 1997. Steve Gossard photo.

you can communicate to your body and your body responds. It's a funny thing because now I know all of us are pretty much retired and I know in your body we can still do it, but in our mind . . . not anymore. So it's a mental thing, you know? In my experience, you learn how to compensate. Sometimes, like I said, you have so much adrenaline. Opening night and stuff like that. If you know how to compensate you're gonna fly. Capable of whatever. And then you have the bad days when you feel really bad.

RG: If you have the flu or something, yeah.

MV: So you need to know how to control your emotions and also you can do the physical body.

TC: Well, I was thinking about the film [of the Flying Cavarettas] we just saw. We did the championships. We got into the town—we got into London and they didn't give us enough time to get over the jet lag. So we were at the tent all day. Didn't eat all day. And we're walking out for the entrance and I felt I was walking like this—because I didn't eat, was tired. And that's the thing about overcoming how you feel. I was a nervous wreck and then once I got up the pedestal board we had this huge applause and we hadn't done anything yet. And I thought okay, now I can—so it is true. You overcome a lot of physical things. I mean, mental things and you hope the physical will take over because of doing repetition and repetition that it usually does. I mean, every once in a while it doesn't, but doing so many shows you just hope it works and it usually does.

RG: Sometimes you go to do the trick and get back on the board—did I just go? It happens so fast and you just get into that



This Flying Vazquez poster has an old timey feel to it. It was an insert in the 1983 Ringling-Barnum Blue Unit program. Steve Gossard collection.

habit or whatever and is it my turn, your turn? You realize it goes so quick sometimes. Tony, wake up.

TS: That's part of my prayer. In my prayers every night. I say, dear God, let your angels surround me. I believe that they do. Otherwise I wouldn't be here this long. And, I know someone else that prays; it's Miguel because I studied videos of the quad and he hovers and you know that's impossible. So I figure it's his guardian angel holding him up there.

SG: Do you ever feel like something was just magic? Something—the idea that you just can't account for. Do you ever feel like something just happened? Just magic

AL: Sorry, I'll translate. Just clicks? Something like that.

TS: Oh yeah, all the time. Can't think of anything off hand, but yeah.

SG: Well, I'll open that up to the floor then.

Q: I have a question. The height in the big top. What is the minimum height that you reach in order to do the flying?

SG: The question was what is the minimum height of the big top for flying?

Q: Or the arena.

JV: Well, you know, 40, 42 feet for your crane bars. That would be about the lowest you can go. You need at least 45 feet.

Q: 45? Okay.

JV: Yeah. If you had—if you rig it and it's 30, 32 feet you need another 10 feet about that.

Q: Yeah, right.

SG: That's a good question.

Q: Another question—which do you like better? Outdoors or indoors performing?

RG: Indoors.

TC: Outside is sort of strange because you just feel open. You feel slower. And inside you feel like you're flying faster.

MV: It's funny because also when you work—I remember when we used to—on the Ringling shows we used to go to Denver,



Tony Steele and Steve Gossard at Gossard's home in Bloomington, Illinois 2010. Steve Gossard photo.



The Flying Malkos in Houston in 1956. Left to right, June Malko, Art Concello, Mike Malko, and Tony Steele. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

Colorado. Just by being high, you know?

Q: That's right. The air.

MV: It's like higher and faster, you know. It's incredible.

RG: You really feel the difference.

Q: How does it performing under a canvas covering, under a big top?

MV: It's different. It's different but you also get used to it. The bad thing is when it's really hot. Even though some of the modern circuses have AC now, when, you know, when it's 95 degrees outside. . . .

RG: It's so hot.

MV: And all that heat races up there it's really hot.

Q: In the process of you doing your triples and quadruples, has anybody ever calculated the speed that you're moving?

MV: There's been speculation, but I don't think they have actually, uh, I think Harry [Graham] did the closest one. Because, you know, it's been speculated 50, 60, 75, 80 miles an hour. And I think they said it's not possible from the timing and height. I don't know what Harry ended up that one time he kind of calculated it, but I think he ended up around 45 miles an hour. Something like that I guess—I don't know if it was Codona or somebody like that speculated 60 miles an hour. There is really no science to it, you know?

RG: It's fast.

Q: Um, Terry, what did it feel like the first time to throw a triple in performance?

TC: It was exciting. The first time I caught it I was thirteen. I think we were on the Ringling Brothers show. Actually, I caught it in practice. I didn't catch it in the show until I was 15. That was at [the circus at] Circus Circus. And a funny story. Al Dobritch who was the one who put together Circus Circus—I was practicing and Al Dobritch goes—he's on the balcony and he goes "Terry, you did the triple, I'll give you a thousand dollars." And I went, okay. So—and I did it. A thousand dollars. He was, like, okay. He was gone. But actually the very first triple that my brother and I caught—he caught me around—I was still in a tux so he caught my leg, my arm, and my hair. We didn't care. We were, like, yay. It was nice.

Q: We've heard a lot about rigging and what was your worst fall. Who was responsible for setting up—do you own your own rigging and do you set it up yourself or does the circus—there's a checklist you go down and look at it? How does that work?

MV: It depends. The majority of shows we do our own rigging, but with the Ringling show it was Ringling's. They own their rigging. At Circus Circus they owned it so they could see. So they do have technicians that take care of the maintenance and every certain period of time—four, five, six months or whatever, the schedule, they change the cables and so on and so forth. When it's your own rigging it's all your responsibility. You have to be in touch with that.

Q: But when you go into Circus Circus are there checklists of at least ten or fifteen things where you have to make sure?

MV: Yeah, they do have a certain person who's been there for the longest time. So he will, you know, he will say it's time to check the fly bar cables.

TC: Check the net.

MV: But he will always let you know what's going on

TC: We were pretty much in charge of the fly bar and the catch bar.

RG: Right. But even when the Ringling stuff went up or on Big Apple we were always there watching it go up right anyway.

SG: One thing people overlook is the enormous work it takes just to rig it up. The trapeze, the net, everything. That's a part of the training too.



The Flying Steeles in the late 1950s when Tony Steele was the only flyer doing a three-and-a-half somersault. Left to right, Rosa Woods, Tony Steele, Bill Woods, and Lily Steele. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

TC: That's one thing—my brother did it all on his own. He didn't let us girls do anything. He was a poor guy. That's funny when we had brothers.

Q: Miguel, how did you feel about throwing the quad the first time?

MV: Throwing it or actually catching it?

Q: Oh, catching. Okay. Whichever.

MV: No, I mean catching it for the first time you mean.

Q: Yes.

MV: It was—it was a feeling of victory and at the same time a lot of relief. We were trying for such a long time and practicing almost every day. We used to practice after doing two or three shows we would go up practice 15, 20, 25 quads and we did that for close to six months. So when it actually happened, first we really couldn't believe it. Like Richie said it happens so fast. We said, "Did we do it? Did we not?" And then when we actually went down and saw the video, then we realized that we had. It's just a lot of mixed feelings, you know? Feelings of joy and like I said, you know, it happened. We did it. At the same time you feel relief that you actually—that all that hard work paid off.

Q: And the punishment of the body that one goes through in not catching.

MV: Yeah, it's pretty excruciating. Like sometimes—these fingers—I used to wear what we call handgrips because your hands on their own you tear up. So even with the grips they do break, but it helps a lot. But sometimes when you miss it's like—it's just really hard. So I bleed sometimes. Not to mention the scrapes in the back. Every trick you drag it and then you lose it a few feet under so after a while I learned to put on several shorts and t-shirts and stuff to kind of protect myself from the scrapes and the beating your body takes it. I was 15, 16 years old. I moved through it pretty fast.

Q: Tony, last night when I talked to you, you said the quad was



Publicity photo for the Flying Cavarettas in 1966. Left to right, Jimmy, Kandi, Moe, Mollie, and Terry. Steve Gossard collection.



The Flying Cavarettas later in their careers. Left to right, Marlene (Mollie), Terry, Jimmy, and Maureen (Moe). Steve Gossard collection.

impossible. So you went to the three and a half. What was your reaction when you heard these guys were doing the quad?

TS: Uh, I couldn't, I couldn't believe it actually. They'll tell you themselves they worked very, very hard. And I believe there was a point where I said you know what? Maybe it can't be done. Forget about it. The only reason that they did it was because of their perseverance. But I—like I say, I don't know if I said that last night or not, but when that person said you can do three, you can do four, my opinion is this person is not too bright because four is impossible. And well, they proved otherwise. It was a total—in my case it was a mental block. And that's the only reason I did three and a half because the quad's impossible. That's a fact in my mind but I'll go halfway and do another half somersault. And I at least thank that dumb person for bringing up that challenge. When I heard about it I still had to see it to believe it. It could be trick photography for all I know.

Q: I know that flyers get hurt. I know you can get hurt going into the net. But I saw a show—I don't know what act it was, but the catcher got kicked in the head and was unconscious up on the catch bar and I was wondering did that happen to you, Juan? Did you ever get hit by someone you were trying to catch?

JV: Well, yes, every catcher gets hit. I guess the biggest hit I got from Miguel was around a quad. He hit me in my mouth and somehow I got my tongue in my teeth. So that was the biggest one. Going out of the catch bar, it happened to me. I was thinking the other day. My daughter Victoria she works at La Nouba [Cirque du Soleil's show at Downtown Disney in Florida]. She was getting ready to work at La Nouba and she said, "Daddy, do you want to go

Show Business

"They Caught the Quad!"

The Flying Vazquezes achieve an astounding four flip-flops

Even when their outstretched hands connected, Miguel and Juan Vazquez were not quite sure they had done it. "I didn't believe it," says Juan. "And I asked myself, 'Did I catch him?'" Miguel, his younger brother, was also uncertain. Says he: "It all happened so fast that only when I looked down and saw the floor did I know that we had done the trick." Actually, what the Flying Vazquezes accomplished together on July 10 in Tucson was much more than a trick. It was an athletic feat equivalent to the breaking of the 4-min. mile: the first quadruple somersault performed before a regular circus audience.

The brothers had managed the nearly impossible stunt ten times in practice sessions over the past year, and they had tried doing it at every performance since Dec. 29, when the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus opened its 112th season. Charley Baumann, the circus' performance director, had seen them fail so many times that he too was stunned when they finally succeeded. He ran to the phone and called the show's producers, Irvin and Kenneth Feld, in Washington. "They asked me why the hell I was calling after midnight," he told TIME's Paul Krueger. "And all I could say was, 'They caught the quad! They caught the quad!'"

Acrobats have been trying to catch the quad since 1897, when, according to many accounts, European Aerialist Lena Jordan first did the triple somersault. The triple is now performed regularly, but it is still an accomplishment reserved for the very best aerialists. Yet Miguel, 17, who represents the fifth generation of a family of Mexican circus performers, was able to do the triple when he was 13. He spun so fast and flew so high that he was urged to go for four.

But there is more to a quad than another flip-flop. When a

flyer is traveling through the air at 80 m.p.h., reaction time is measured in milliseconds. "If it's a triple somersault, Miguel can feel if he's going too fast," explains Juan, 32. "He can relax and slow down. If he's going too slowly, he can tuck up tighter and complete the third somersault faster." The quadruple, by contrast, allows no such mid-course adjustment; once the flyer has released the bar and tucked himself up for the first of four turns, he is spinning too fast to correct himself. The burden of timing rests with the catcher. If any changes are to be made, he must make them, matching his swing to the human projectile hurtling toward him.

Although a nylon net prevents a fall to the ground, the dangers are considerable if something goes wrong. Both brothers could land on their necks or heads, causing injury, or possibly even death. As the catcher, Juan also runs the risk of a shoulder dislocation. To prevent such accidents, the brothers have made their bodies into pieces of interlocking machinery: they play soccer together for agility, lift weights for strength and box together to heighten their sensitivity to each other's movements. Miguel is small,

5 ft. 7 in., and slim, as fliers tend to be. He weighs only 132 lbs. and has an almost invisible 26-in. waist. "I think he was born to fly," says Juan. "He is very thin, and yet very, very powerful." Juan, also 5 ft. 7 in., is 33 lbs. heavier, but he is not exactly a candidate for Weight Watchers either. His waist measurement is 28 inches.

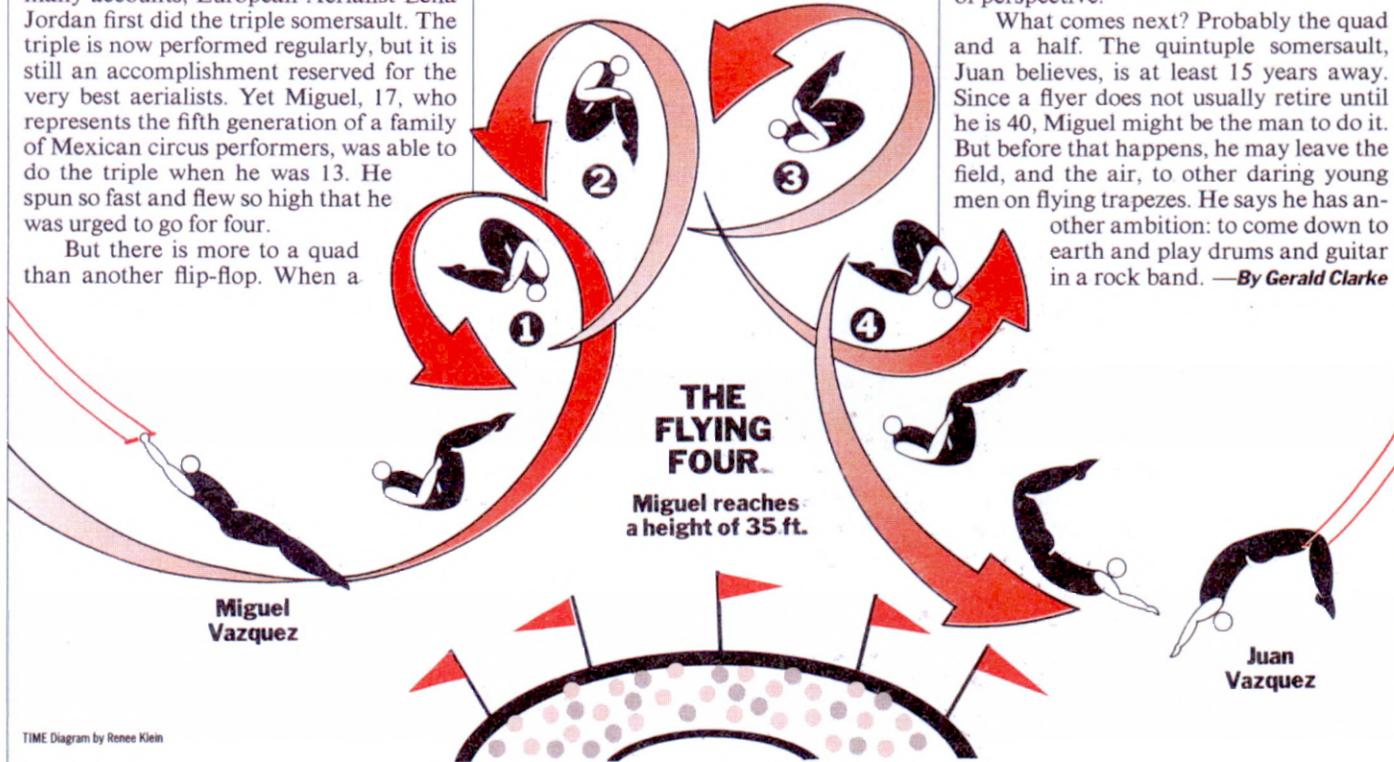
In addition to all the exercise, the brothers practice their act three times a week, trying to do the quad ten or 15 times each session. Most of the attempts are recorded on video tape, and when the acrobats are through, they watch what they have just done. Like football players after the game, they study their movements so that they can detect split-second errors in timing. They actually have six practice quads on tape, but the only stunts that are officially counted are those before a paying audience.

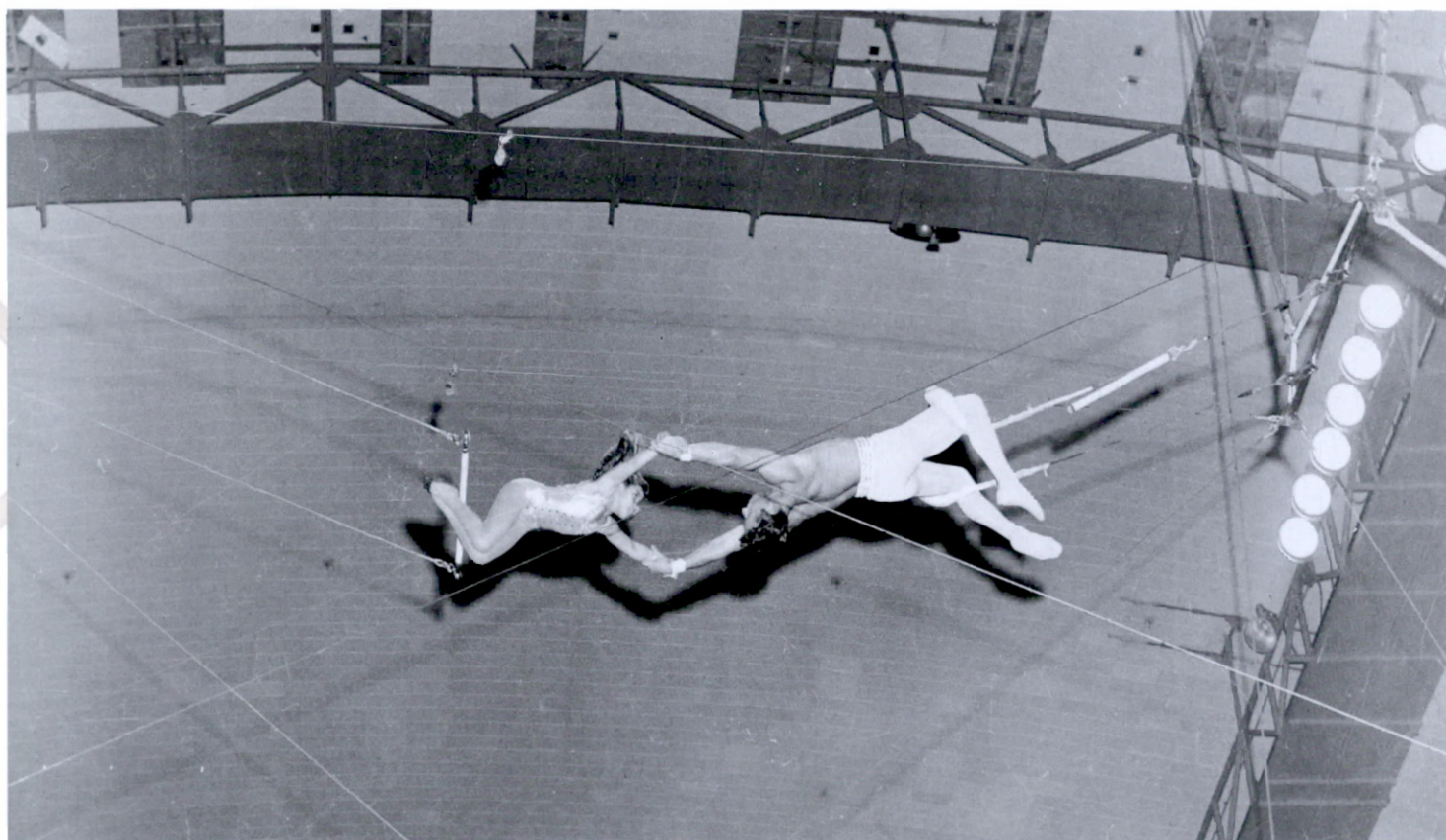
The Vazquezes plan to continue to do the quad, but Juan acknowledges that they may be able to do it only 40% of the time; success depends on an almost mystical factor that they refer to as "the feel of the rigging." The rigging is the 33-ft.-tall metal frame from which they work; sometimes it feels solid and sometimes it does not. Cold weather can ruin a performance. Says Juan: "Your body just doesn't want to move the way you want it to." Even the color of the ceiling can affect results. A black ceiling can cause dizziness whereas a white offers a good sense of perspective.

What comes next? Probably the quad and a half. The quintuple somersault, Juan believes, is at least 15 years away. Since a flyer does not usually retire until he is 40, Miguel might be the man to do it. But before that happens, he may leave the field, and the air, to other daring young men on flying trapezes. He says he has another ambition: to come down to earth and play drums and guitar in a rock band. —By Gerald Clarke



Miguel Vazquez





The young Terry Cavaretta being caught by Paul McCausland in the Flying Alexanders act. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

up and catch some throws?" So I went up and catch some throws and somehow she was a little late and the double was short. So I came out of my catch bar to give more space for me to catch her and when I grabbed her, we both went into the net. So it was the first and only time that I came out catching. The only other time I came out catching was when the crane bar snapped right in the middle so we both, Vinicio, my little brother and me, went to the net. That was only two times that I can recall.

Q: I can't remember what act it was I saw.

JV: Broken ribs, broken jaws—especially when you do it with your feet.

RG: You get kicked in the face.

TS: I pulled my catcher Billy Woods out of the lock. The same circumstances. The trick was short so he extended his legs to get a little extra—it landed up in the net holding on to each other. And I turned to him and I said, "You got me?"

Q: Miguel, did you work with any other catchers than Juan?

MV: Yeah, my other brother Felipe and my other brother Vinicio caught me.

Q: In performance?

MV: In performance, yeah. Actually, my other brother Pepe caught me. So most of my brothers caught me. And a few other people playing around and stuff like that, yes. But Juan was the only one who caught the quad.

Left page. When Miguel Vazquez caught the first quad in performance in Tucson on July 10, 1982, it was world-wide news. It even merited a full-page article in the July 26, 1982 edition of Time magazine.

Q: I know you worked with the Terrells.

TC: Yeah, that's my first husband.

Q: Was that a lot different from working with [your brother] Jimmy?

TC: Well, he was a lot taller. He was a little bit easier on the catch bar. But every catcher's a little bit different. If they're good there's just a slight difference maybe on the length. But usually it doesn't feel like, you know, a huge difference.

SG: I remember an old flyer who said this is a catcher's trick. Do you have a feeling there were more tricks that were more catcher than flyer?

TC: Well, I think sometimes if you're doing a twisting turn and you don't finish it, the catcher does the last half of it. Also I've done triples where I thought I was going down and my brother snagged it. That was definitely his triple. So you could say my first triple was



Terry Cavaretta relates a story at the Trapeze Seminar that tickles Richie Gaona. Mark Schmitt photo. ©Philip Weyland.

a catcher's trick. I was going down. So I think that's what they mean.

SG: Anyone else?

Q: Miguel, what was your weight, your optimum weight? What was the best weight for you?

MV: The best weight was around 145, 150 pounds. That's when I felt not too light and not too heavy. Just right.

Q: What about—Terry—what about you? Delicate question.

TC: I was always trying to be five pounds less than whatever I was. I was never happy. I was best at 108-110.

RG: I think I was 158 when I was flying.

Q: Thank you.

RG: You should see her flying. She came by my house last May and she still looks incredible up there.

TC: That was fun. I don't miss flying until I see it and then I get all—it's just—I just want to do it again.

Q: Have you flown recently?

TC: Yeah, just at Richie's place. I was this close to doing it. I just love doing it. I was, like, I got on the set and I don't know if I could do it. But my husband he was saying, "don't do anything stupid." So I was, like, okay, I'm thinking about it. But I think next time if I go to his place I'll do it. 'Cause I trust him with the belt. Yeah. He's amazing.

Q: Thank you. You said there was a part where you said it couldn't be done. But I wondered if Irvin Feld provided any extra stimulation.

MV: He was always very, supportive. We really missed him when he passed in '84 because he was our number one fan. Treated us with a lot of respect. And just by the way he treated us. Just by that alone made you want to do your best. And he did. He would always give us confidence. "You guys are doing a good job," you know? He did motivate us quite a bit.

SG: A lot of this information is in Harry's [Harry Graham's *The Biggest Trick* about Juan Vazquez and the Vazquez family] book. Even if you don't buy it you really should read it because it's quite a historical document. It's a dramatic story of yearning and work that went into this achievement.

Q: Um, I've seen films of the Wintergarten in Berlin [showing the Flying Codonas] and I've always been struck by how far down both the fly and the catch bar are—the rigging and it's just much longer than anything you guys have ever done. And I guess I'm wondering how much does technology have to do with the success or

spectacular nature of a trick as opposed to athleticism. And by that I mean, you know, a lot of what you do is physics. You know, if you get high air how does that impact you? If the rope is longer—get a longer arc or you're farther apart or if one bar is lower than the other. Can any of you comment on that?

MV: Yeah, that's practically what Steve was saying. As far as all of us, we did the classic flying act which is very close. We vary within inches, at most a foot. Now the other Korean acts, Russian acts—they vary it between five feet.

Q: Wow.

MV: Sometimes it's even longer than that. Flying regular measurements but they're very high. Like when we worked in Holland, we were working around 45, 50 feet high. Our head was 50-something feet. When you're shooting it just looks like you're 100 feet high. That's why those films look like that. But as far as I know we all did, you know. Like I said, it changes within inches. Now if we tried the modern flying trapeze I don't know maybe what we could've done. You know what I mean? Because once you drop the catcher 3, 4 feet lower and spread it apart you have a lot more space now.

TC: More somersaults.

MV: Terry could do a three and a half. It's a big difference.

Q: Oh yeah. I heard the other day when Antoinette Concello did it they lowered—[husband] Art [Concello] lowered the catch bar a little bit to give her a half second more.

TC: It helps.

Q: For the final rotation. But for you Terry was it the same on yours?

TC: Well, all flying acts are a two foot—the standard is a two foot drop to the catch bar. So it's lower than that. It would be two and a half, three feet. We did it on standard rigging. Especially when we came to Circus Circus—the rigging's built into the ceiling so you don't have a choice. So we had, like, what? I don't know—there was five different flying acts and we all had that the same rigging.

Q: Oh, that's interesting.

TC: Yeah.

MV: It's not easy flying there. I flew there a few years too. The ceiling's pretty low and it's short this way so you need to, you know, you need to accommodate to the rigging not the rigging to you.



Richie Gaona and Al Light, at the time director of the Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State University at 2010 CHS convention. Steve Gossard photo.



Richie Gaona's brother Tito on Ringling-Barnum, mid-1970s. Used with permission of Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



Miguel Vazquez in a 1983 Ringling-Barnum publicity photo. Circus World Museum collection.

Because you got to get used to it.

Q: Does it limit the tricks you can do?

MV: Excuse me?

Q: When you're limited like at Circus Circus, does it limit what you can do?

MV: Yeah, I couldn't throw a quad in there.

RG: Didn't they have a hole—?

MV: Yeah they had a hole so you could back up and stick your head through. I remember doing some double doubles and smacking the ceiling with my hand, so I had to get really low not to hit it. Like I said, you have to compensate somehow to be able to perform there.

Q: Getting back to that Codona film [at Wintergarten]—one of the things that really struck me—and I've seen it on films for all of your acts—he gets to a point where honest to God it looks like he's defying gravity, like he's floating for a second. Michael Jordan could do this too.

MV: So does he.

Q: I know. What's that about?

JV: Well, it's a two part thing, you know? It's physics. You learn to manipulate your body in the air. And the other is a gift. You know, you're pretty much born with it and once you find that match you pretty much run away with it. It's just the way. Sometimes it's just inhaling like that, you know, it just makes you stay in a place for a little while. It's little things you learn—you learn your body and physics so you learn what works for you. And Codona, that's what made him so great. I think he was way ahead of his time. If you see some of the films of him.

Q: Just beautiful.

JV: That's why he can do the two and a half from the [catch] bar.

Not many flyers have actually done that. We haven't talked about that much. Just doing a two and a half return back to the flying trapeze. He did it beautiful.

RG: And he would just float there too. I bet.

Q: Is a quintuple possible? Tony said, you know, a quad couldn't be done so he did a three and a half. Now can you do it—is five possible?

JV: Not on the standard riggings.

MV: We practiced it for a few weeks. I practiced four and a half for three weeks and we came very close to catching it. And as Tony explained leg tricks were never my favorite because you always feel like you're at a disadvantage.

RG: Head landing.

MV: The head landing. You feel like you're going so fast and if the catcher doesn't take you right away you gotta twist out of it. So the feeling itself is something really, you know, it's an ugly feeling and I didn't like it too much. But we tried it for a while. We have videotapes of it coming really close and then I tried a quint for a few weeks. Also just to get the feeling of it. I think it's possible on one of the new riggings, you know. It could be possible. I don't know if you would pull your shoulders out.

JV: The more you see there is a misconception on the flying trapeze is lower than the bar. So let's say I'm going to lower the bar for example Miguel is throwing the quad and I'm catching him. By the time—let's say he weighs 150, he goes to five times whatever he weighs. Okay? So if I'm catching 150 and five times that. But now if I'm lowering the bar another feet, the weight—it gets greater. If I lower the bar another two feet, it gets greater. So the lower the catch bar, the greater the weight he's bringing into the catch. So it would be possible.

MV: That's one thing about the Korean acts and the Russian acts. You know, when this one got hurt they send him home and get another one. We didn't have that luxury. We had to last as long as we could. So that's the difference. They can swap people. Case in point—Cirque du Soleil. They change people every two, three months because they keep getting hurt and hurt and hurt. Our people go 25, 30, 40 years.

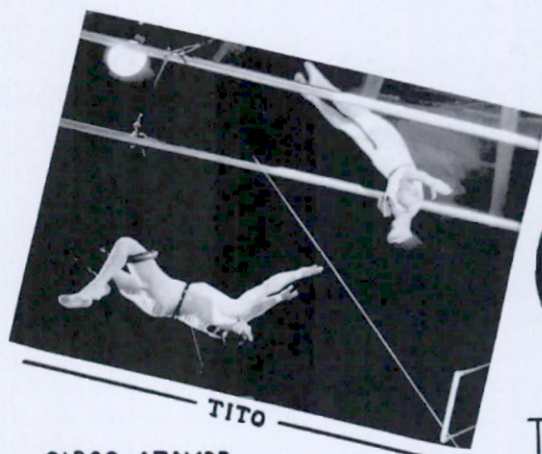
RG: My dad always said you gotta take care of your body if you want to make it last. And because, like he said, there's not another



In the early days the Gaonas had a second routine, a trampoline act called the Titos, shown here during a television appearance about 1960. Left to right, Tito, father Victor, Chela, and Armando. Circus World Museum collection.

THE AMAZING GAONAS

ACCLAIMED
THE WORLD OVER



TITO

CIRCO ATAYDE
MEXICO

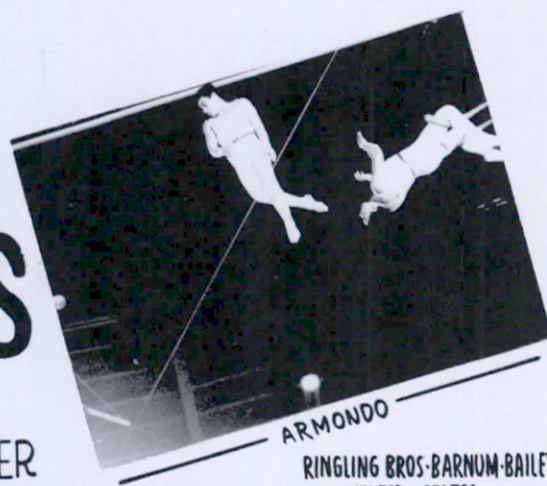
CIRQUE BOUGLIONE
PARIS

CIRCUS KRONE
GERMANY

CIRKUS SCOTT
SWEDEN



THE GAONAS WITH ED SULLIVAN
ON LOCATION IN MUNICH, GERMANY.
TITO GAONA WAS FEATURED ON
THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW AS
ONE OF THE ONLY
PERFORMERS ON THE FLYING
TRAPEZE TO COMPLETE A
TRIPLE SOMERSAULT
RETURNING TO THE BAR WITH
A TRIPLE PIROUETTE



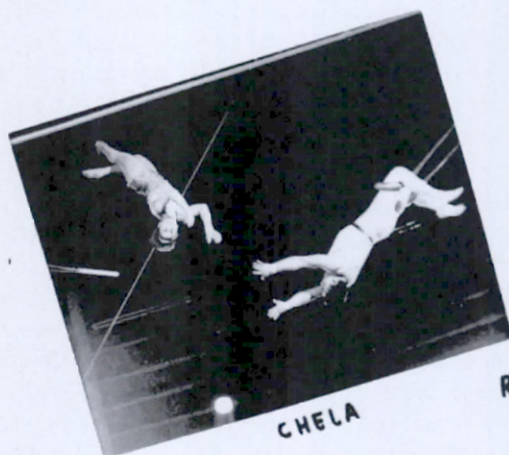
ARMONDO

RINGLING BROS.-BARNUM-BAILEY
UNITED STATES

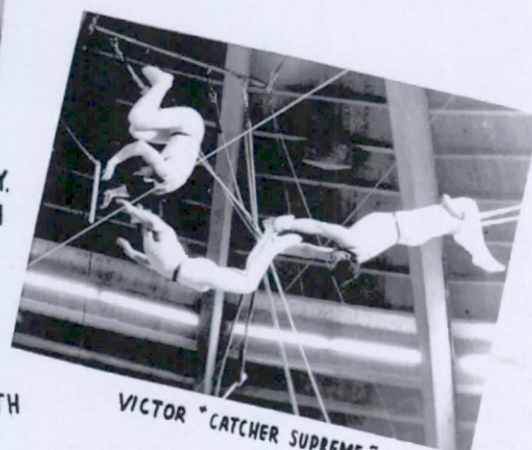
CLYDE BEATTY-COLE BROS.
UNITED STATES "AMERICA"

BERTRAM MILLS CIRCUS
"COMMAND PERFORMANCE"
OLYMPIA - LONDON, ENGLAND

E.K. FERNANDEZ CIRCUS
HAWAII



CHELA



VICTOR "CATCHER SUPREME"

brother who can take your place. So.

Q: I just wanted to know—speaking of replacements and future generations, do any of you have children who are flyers?

RG: My son catches and we run a trapeze school in California so he never got to perform, but he's been in films and stuff like that, but he's gone on to performing catching in commercials and different things like that and different student films. And every once in a while—Tito came out—he got to catch Tito and that made his day. And he catches me just playing around and stuff like that. Lately, um, we had another—Augustino who was just with us. He caught his first—Alex caught his triple for the first time. He never caught triples before and he just left a couple days ago. He got, like, six triples already. You know, so for him that was a huge thing because of knowing Tito and the whole family history, you know, he wasn't around the circus part of it at the time, but he is in the backyard now. So that's kinda cool.

TC: And he's very good.

JV: I got a daughter. Her name is Victoria. And she wants to be like them. And she works La Nouba she's the only one.

Publicity photo used by the Gaonas in the early 1970s. Father Victor Gaona was still the act's catcher. Circus World Museum collection.

MV: I have two kids that just play in the backyard.

TC: My son went across the rigging. My 9 year old son went across.

RG: I think that's one thing I thought—sadly—that you don't see those generations—you don't see families like our families that are performing, like you said, in Cirque du Soleil they just throw people together and they're not a family thing so they can do whatever they want. We stick together all the time through hard times or whatever for so many years. And you don't see that so much lately.

Q: Speaking of family, who calls the shots in different families?

JV: It's a family affair.

RG: Dad, older brother.

TC: Or sisters.

Q: I have a question about maintaining your concentration. I saw an interview on film with The Flying [name unintelligible] and [name unintelligible] was talking about one time an hour before

they were to perform they got word that their mother had died. And they went on. And he said the way we were able to keep their concentration and this way his sister said the same thing later. They did it for mom and they were able to keep their concentration. Is that often a difficult issue?

MV: It is and I guess everybody will react differently, you know, depending on your character. Case in point, my brother was just talking about the incident when Julio Farias got killed. He happens to be my wife's cousin. And they were working in one ring and my wife was working in the other ring with her father. And that happened on a practice session before opening night. And opening night we usually have one show, 7:00 o'clock, 8:00 at night. So they went up to practice because Julio was out for two or three weeks, so when he came back he really wanted to make sure he could throw a three, three and a half for the show. So they were both practicing. My wife actually sees him from the other side do his trick, fall out of the net, land, and then he dies. On that same night she had to perform. So you can imagine staying focused and concentrating to overcome what you have to do. And there's been situations like that. Some people can handle it. Some people don't do that well. It's a character thing.

TS: Tito Gaona was giving some advice to, uh, a flyer named Padilla. Padilla was going to do the triple in the show. They were both on the Ringling show, working at opposite ends. Ring one and ring three and he was trying to encourage him and give him any tips that he could. He said what you have to do is count when you're doing the triple. One, two, three and then you open. And that's how you know when to open by counting one, two, three so remember



In 1961 eight-year-old Terry Cavaretta joined the Flying Alexanders. Left to right, Paul McCausland, Kandy Cavaretta, Terry, Rose Alexander, and Fay Alexander. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.



The Flying Cavarettas in 1979. Left to right, Terry, Marlene, Maureen, and Jimmy. Used with permission from Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

that and you'll be all right. So that night he tried the triple and he looked over before he went to do it. "You going to be all right?" And he looked over and Mr. Padilla was in the net on his head. And he ran over and he said, "What happened? Didn't you count like I told you?" And he said, "Yeah, I did, but see I st-st-stutter."

Q: Thus far we've talked about physics and about athleticism. There's a showmanship part too. Could you talk a little bit about showmanship and the presentation of how those interact? Style? You know, you guys have done that.

TC: Well, I think it's a big part of the act. You have to have the tricks and you have to have presentation. Without one or the other you don't have a full act. So, I mean, you can do all the tricks in the world, but if you're not excited about doing it—the audience—because a lot of times the audience doesn't know what you're doing. I mean, especially in Europe they know a little more about tricks than here, so you have to sort of make it exciting. You can do a somersault and if you do it with excitement and do it with style, oh wow, that's great. But it's—you really need to have both to have a good act.

MV: Definitely. You know, and it helps when you are naturally charismatic. Number one, so, you know, like Tito Gaona. He's the showman of the showmen just by standing there and smiling. But, you know, he's naturally that way. He stands there and you can see it. You know, when it's natural that's the best way to do it. Right, Tony?

TS: Yep. Tell you that about showmanship. The Flying Cavarettas when they went to Europe besides shipping their rigging—when

they shipped the costumes it only cost about two dollars.

TC: The first time we went to Europe we packed his huge trunk and it ended up costing, like, \$500 dollars. I had no idea we had to pay for extra baggage. Those little costumes weighed a lot.

Q: I have a question for Richie Gaona. Do you think that *Killer Sawdust* [a home-made film by his brother Tito Gaona] will ever have a theatrical release?

RG: You saw that?

Q: I've seen it, yes.

RG: Gosh, I haven't seen that in—what was the clown who put that together?

Q: Michael Christensen.

RG: I don't know. It was a fun thing. Tito always made his little movies here and there. He made one in Japan with Lee Meriwether. And then he got together with Mike and he just went all out.

Q: Well, it starred Tito Gaona and Robert DeNiro.

RG: They gave him a little part in it because he came to the show all the time in New York. So who knows. That was a fun thing though.

Q: Have you worked with any other Chinese trapeze performers and how do you evaluate them? Every time I see a Chinese circus they seem to be—performers seem to be performing younger and younger. Are they very capable?

TC: I'm sure they can do the tricks. The Koreans and Chinese use a different rigging. You know, it's—

Q: Different rigging?

TC: Well, not the standard flying act rigging. Don't get me wrong—they do amazing tricks and I mean, they have little kids that are performing, but from what I've seen I've never seen them do it on a standard flying rigging. Am I right?

RG: And that makes all the difference.

TC: See, the public doesn't understand that. I mean, it looks fantastic, but you just can't compare a standard flying act to a Korean or Chinese flying act. Like we said, the four foot drop over here or the pedestal board's way up here. Everything is different. It's like comparing apples and oranges. It just isn't the same.

MV: Well, remember when we went to visit you Tony in Orlando? Some of those guys are working with new rigging. It's a different flying trapeze dimensions. It's built by Russian people so they're long and low. And then we were there and we visited Tony and we



The Flying Gaonas in an early 1980s publicity photo. Left to right, Armando, Tito, Chela, and Richie. Chela holds the Golden Clown award won by the troupe at the Monte Carlo Circus Festival in December 1978. Circus World Museum collection.



The Flying Vazquez in 1983. Left to right, Felipe Vazquez, Rosa Segrera, Juan Vazquez, and Miguel Vazquez. In December of that year Rosa and Miguel married. Used with permission of Illinois State University's Special Collections, Milner Library.

went up there in the rigging they have there and the guys, some of the guys went up with me and Tony and were struggling [on the old-style rigging]. Man, that was hard. They went into a—they're really circus flyers but what happened they went on tour they accommodated to this new rigging so when they went back to the old one they were struggling. They realized how difficult it was to go back to a regular flying trapeze after they were flying in the other dimensions. Like Terry says this is the technical side of it that only the experts know about. Average people wouldn't know the difference. Everything looks the same to them.

TC: Well, who was it who had a flying act in the beginning and they had all kinds of trouble? They got rid of it. They went to a bar act because it was just too different. It was too hard to teach the other people. They train people all the time and they just couldn't train them that quickly to do a regular, standard flying act so they got rid of it.

AL: I know Cirque for a long time only hired international gymnasts. And they ran into a pretty big problem in having the skills transfer over as far as flipping and twisting, but then there's no actually working with other people. They're trying to train gymnasts as catchers and gymnasts to work with catchers and it's just—there's some nuances in there that just don't translate when you're just an international gymnast. And gymnastics are fantastic but they're solo. Or they're on the floor and they do the floor routine. They're not that interaction and that's where I think they had a lot of trouble with those acts. That's why now you think Cirque is hiring people with circus backgrounds.

RG: Yeah, that's happening right now. Our friends they just had an audition and they're already trapeze people. So they're putting a couple families together who are trapeze families to go overseas in a couple of months.

SG: I have a related question. I've asked you before Tony but I forget what you said. I'll just have it answered again for this audience. Historically, the Asians—as disciplined and amazing as they are—they haven't done aerial acts at all. Occasionally a wire walker. Why do you think that is that the Asian people?

TS: Oh, I just happen to know this. I'm not smart. The Asian acts have been the same for hundreds of years, maybe thousands. And they're basically the same thing. Foot jugglers. They would do

handstands, contortions, bicycle—put a whole bunch of people on a bicycle. So if you were to go see an Asian circus, you'd be seeing the same kind of acts. And the reason is they didn't have larger buildings—they didn't have a place to put a rigging up. I don't know about why they didn't put it outdoors. But my understanding is that they didn't have buildings available for Asian circus and therefore they were late bloomers as far as aerial acts. They came on strong when they did, but now if you see an Asian circus you see a bigger variety, but then you'd see straps, foot juggling, the vases. But now they're more variety and they've gone up into the air because evidently they have facilities to practice in.

Q: Just a quick question. Do you have a favorite show that you worked for or a favorite city that you played in?

TC: Las Vegas.

RG: I loved it when we toured with Knie. The country itself is beautiful. It's like a well-oiled machine. The little trim bars and everything. Was one of my favorites. Australia because I surf all the time. I love Australia.

TC: I love Australia too.

JV: Ringling Brothers was the money for us. Because we accomplished the quad.

MV: But as far as performing Knie. People go to the circus like they do to the opera. You see them in suits and coats. Dressed up. It's a different feeling. It's exciting. Just incredible.

TC: I just wanted to say one thing. For a person to become a circus performer in the United States or Mexico or wherever, we don't get any help from the government. Places like Russia, Korea, Canada, China—the government subsidizes the schools. So they put these kids in schools. They do shows, so they pretty much do everything for the performers. In the United States we're all from—we do it on their own. It's up to us. Nobody tells us you're going to do this. We do it on our own. So all our accomplishments it's what we've done, not what someone telling us—okay, this is what you're going to do. Which makes it harder on one hand if you have to do it on your own, but on the other hand it's your own accomplishments. It's not somebody saying, okay, this is what you have to do. So I think it's harder in the United States and Mexico compared to other places.

Q: Obviously all of you sitting up there are in a class of your own, but I'm wondering is there anyone working out there today on a classical rigging that you think will be joining you in the future?

TC: I just saw the—well, it was two summers ago. The Flying Caballeros they have two little boys. Absolutely amazing. The one kid was 10 and he was doing triple and double full. They're going from town to town. And they had this thing on Oprah about these amazing kids. And I said, "Rueben, you've got to get your son on here." He said, "I barely have time to take a shower." But I saw—the

younger brother was 8 at the time and he was doing a double like nothing. The other one, like I said, was 10. Has style, charisma which is amazing but you don't hear about making a living. They're just going from town to town and just doing what they do. But I'm sure—I hope you will [see him] because he is amazing.

MV: And sometimes it's hard to tell because sometimes they look really promising but they just don't come through and then the ones you think this guy will never do anything he becomes amazing so it's just one of those things that happens. I know a lot of people who—young kids who are really promising and then when they became teenagers, they just walk away or just don't want to bother with it anymore. No, you don't make me do it and I don't want to do it. And then all the ones do totally the opposite. They don't like it and sometimes they just develop a passion and just run away with it.

MV: There's a few good flyers right now. [Unintelligible] is doing the big tricks in Japan. He has accomplished a triple, triple and a half. Big tricks. And I don't think he's that young. Mid-30s. He's been around for a long time, but nobody's heard of him.

TC: But I think that—

MV: Case in point—you know Raul Jiménez. This kid was amazing. He was what I remember when I was in Mexico when I was around 25 he must have been 14 years old and this kid used to open his act with a triple somersault. Then a double double, a triple back with a full twist which I don't think anybody has that and he must have been 14 years old. And from there he went to Europe and spent his whole career in Europe and in America nobody knows him. So he's a legend but you don't hear about him too much.

SG: Juan and Richie and Al—those guys who have worked as

catchers, do you think there are certain tricks that are hard to catch and are they the same tricks that are the hardest for the flyers?

JV: Definitely there's some simple, simple tricks and difficult tricks. Especially the tricks—the twisting tricks are a little harder than the straight tricks. Half, double and a half definitely.

AL: Yeah, twisting tricks definitely. Tony's throw a full one and a half and that's interesting. But when I was learning with Tony he used to say—he'd literally say okay, go like this and don't move your head.

TS: What I would tell Al when he was catching me I was always afraid that he'd get a big head, you know? And so I would introduce people in the act—this is Mary, this is Susie, and he's the catcher. To keep him from getting a big head and not ask for more money. He asked me—should I come in a little bit to give you an advantage? I said Al, you just get into your locked position, close your eyes and stick your hands out, and I'll do the rest.



Publicity photo of Terry Cavaretta during her days at Circus Circus Casino in Las Vegas. Terry Cavaretta collection.

AL: He did say yeah, I want to do a two and a half full. Don't move your head. I did this and he comes at me. And Tony likes to do a tuck twist. Kinda goes like this. Right in the head. Okay, so the next time I just—

JV: It depends on the flyer. Some flyers are easy to catch when you have the same catchers and different people flying. And they can tell you some people probably feel light, some people feel real heavy. And maybe you weigh the same it's just the way you are in the air.

AL: There's a chemistry for sure. Sometimes you just click. Sometimes you're just off and you can't explain why.

TS: There is one trick the catchers don't like. A double forward. Because, you just can't get out of the way if they happen to go long and you get kicked usually right under the rib bone and it knocks the wind out of you, you know? I would like to throw that trick and every time they say a double forward and they go . . . Al happened to be on the board with me at the time and the catcher was Slick Valentine. He's a big, tough guy. He's not afraid of anything. But I knew even he would be afraid of the double forward. He said, "What are you doing next?" I said, "Al, watch his face." That was the fun to watch his face. Um, how about a double forward? He's sitting on the catch bar and he always had his face to one side like this. And he says, never mind the mule, just load the wagon.

Q: There's two posters for the Clarkonian act. One from 1904 features what they call a double twisting somersault. Another from 1910 features a triple twisting somersault. And for many years people thought that the triple twisting somersault was a standard, legendary triple somersault but it seems like it's not. Do any of you have knowledge of a double twisting somersault, triple twisting somersault or what the relative difficulties are?

MV: Just a twist inside a simple somersault. That's all it is. Which means it's one pirouette or one turn. Double would be two turns, and triple would be three turns. On a single somersault.

Q: And the relative difficulty of performing that act would be a triple?

MV: They're easier than a triple somersault. Once you do a triple twist, it's a little bit complicated to control your rotation because you could over rotate this way but it's still easier to do than a triple somersault. But then the trick's getting ready a double double and you get another somersault and it makes the twist that much more complicated.

SG: I read that you've heard of tricks that you've never seen but in your mind you can visualize. Could you elaborate on that? Is this something that you can describe?

MV: Yeah, and I know a lot of professional athletes do that before a game. All the steps. Everything you gotta go through and follow through. It's a mental thing more than anything. I know a lot of us talk to ourselves—"you can do this." Talking to yourself as you're getting ready to go through a trick. You're almost hyping yourself up.

RG: We're not crazy.

SG: Well, I've heard flyers were somewhat superstitious. Change clothes and put his tights and leave his hat and cigar on the whole time because he thought it was good luck. Do you have any quirks like that?

RG: Well, I know, you know, I was always warming up early, stretching, stuff like that. And Tito would be one of these yeah, whatever kind of things. And we were doing one of his little movies in Switzerland and we're up by the Matterhorn and Tito says, "it's show time, we gotta get back. And you gotta catch a train to get back to the car to get back to the thing." No, no, the sun's comin' up and he kept stretchin' it and stretchin' it. And I'm sweatin' bullets 'cause I know we open the second half of the show. And how far we were from the place. And finally we get to the car. I know we're late. The show had already started and, you know, I missed my little routine of what I have to do and that's just the way it was. Tito just gets in there and throws his tights on. Armando had a pissed off look on his face. "You guys just barely made it. You just got through just as intermission was starting," he says. And Tito just throws his tights on and just goes.

TC: My brother used to fall asleep in the dressing room between shows. We'd be on stage. "Where's Jimmy? Oh no, he's probably asleep. Call the dressing room." He'd get his tights on and go up. And the first trick my sister Molly who was afraid of heights—my brother did a trick where he crossed his hands to catch her and she'd say, "Jimmy, don't forget to cross your hands." And sure enough

because he just woke up and she'd go, "Jimmy!" 'Cause he wasn't awake. I mean, I think it was nothing. He'd just put his tights on and go. I would warm up a little bit, but I didn't have—I wasn't superstitious. We had all our nieces and nephews in the dressing room and I just wanted to find a place to stretch my legs. They were all over the place, but I didn't have much of a superstition.

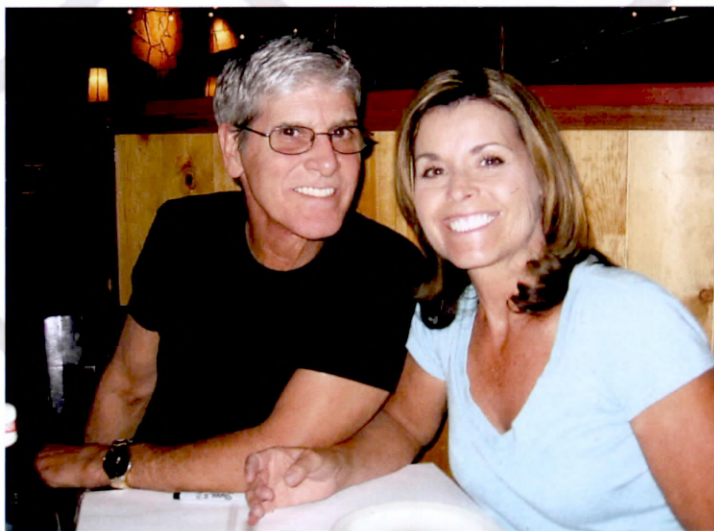
MV: No, me neither. Just the basic. In case you're running late.

Q: Baseball players say you can't play the game unless you're loose. I'm not sure what that means exactly, but you get too tight, too loose—how does that play with flying?

RG: Well, everybody wants to stretch out. You want to feel as comfortable as you can. And, you know, nowadays my body can't do what it used to so you're limited to what you can do now, but back then, like I said, I always had my little routine. I want to stretch out and be limber because you never know how you're going to line up on the net. So the better you're stretched out even if you take a bad fall you're not going to snap, break, or pop.

Q: I think what I was trying to say with the baseball analogy was I think it's a mental approach of loose, tight as opposed to a physical, uh, loose tight. Can you get so emotional, so anxious that you're going to screw up because you just can't do it?

JV: It happened in Monte Carlo. We were in Germany. We finished that night. We flew the day after then we practiced. We



Terry Cavaretta and her brother and catcher Jim in 2007. Steve Gossard photo.

didn't have the time. But it was so great that when Miguel went he was too high when he threw the first quad. Too much. He was too much. But we saw it on the video it was too much.

TC: Also with the mental thing when we did the command performance for the queen. I think I told Richie that we signed a contract a year in advance so for one year I worried about it. I was thinking—every day I thought about it. And so when we got there we practiced I did the triple good in practice and then for the show I go up and I missed the triple and I went in the back and said okay, that's over with. Let's do it right. But it was all a mental thing. It was just I worried about it a year and I did it just like I thought.

MV: Everybody reacts differently and everybody has to go through what they have to go through to overcome and compensate the situation. Obviously the opening night in Madison Square Garden and that was a special night, big night, so it was not like your everyday show so you need to do what you need to do.

RG: One of the only times I saw Tito actually nervous was when John Ringling North and Henry Ringling North came to visit and I'd never performed for them so I don't care. But Tito was actually nervous. He popped out all the tricks and everything just for him. He was performing for them for what they did for him—bring him to the States and all that stuff. But that's one of the only times I've seen Tito that nervous I think. He just wanted to perform good for them again.

TC: I think that's something that's kept us all—kept flying interesting and exciting for us. Whenever you perform, it's always something new. You can never do—I don't think you can ever do a trick perfectly because you'll always think oh, it looked good but my toes weren't pointed or my legs came apart a little bit, so even though we did it on so many shows and for years and years it was always challenging. It never got boring. Even though at Circus Circus it was, like, nobody was there when we performed. It was just exciting to do your trick and to do it right. And, and that's what kept it exciting. The challenge of doing each trick the best that you could do.

Q: When you have other performers coming to visit, are you really nervous and thinking I gotta do good, I gotta do good for them?

RG: Sure, because they know what you're doing. Why didn't you do that trick or whatever. But it's fun that way because they're going to appreciate it maybe more because they understand tricks, you

know? And when we go to circus parties and watch them fly, we always cheer them on and hey, why didn't you do your triple today? You know, whatever. But it's just that kind of close friendship you have with everybody.

TC: Well, that's what I was going to say. Yeah, because we know the feeling of when performers watch us and we get nervous so now we go see a show it's, like, don't be nervous, please. We know how you feel.

RG: Just have fun with it.

Q: You mentioned that your sister had a problem with height. I wondered how you all dealt with the height and if it was a problem when you started out.

TC: I never was afraid of heights. Only one of my sisters was. So the heights didn't bother us. Good thing because when we went to Circus Circus we were, I don't know, how high was it?

MV: It's pretty high. You were, like, 50 feet.

TC: Yeah, when Circus Circus first opened I think it was three years, there wasn't a balcony so we were working about 50 feet in the air. And looking down and we had the craps tables underneath us. But that was very hard to concentrate when you're—before that we were on the road and nobody was allowed to go under the net of course and then you go to Circus Circus and there's all kinds of things happening underneath you. There's craps tables and people yelling and screaming and you, like,

don't look down. But the height didn't bother me. Only one of my sisters.

RG: Yeah, it didn't bother me either. I used to climb up there as a five year old little kid so I just grew up on it.

Q: Richie, where's [your sister] Chelsea toady?

RG: Chelsea's in Venice. And Armando's in Venice. And Tito's in Boston. That's why he couldn't be here. He's doing the summer camps in Boston and I'll be there next week with him helping him out.

Q: Richie, you mentioned about your brother being nervous when John and Buddy North came to see you. Did Art Concello ever come to see any of your acts. I know Tony worked for him, but how did that work—

RG: I don't know if he did or not. I know Antoinette Concello came out every once in a while. Just to do it every once in a while but I don't know about the others.

SG: Anyone else? Maybe this would be a good time to break then. I'd like to thank you all. *BW*



After the seminar, the flyers demonstrated their art for the CHS. Shown here, left to right, are Miguel Vazquez, Terry Cavaretta, unknown, and Chris Ries. Ries was a member of the Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State University at the time, and is now on Circus Vargas. © Philip Weyland photo.

Bill Kasiska's Letterheads

FIVE FEARLESS FLYERS

SENSATIONAL FLYING RETURN ACT

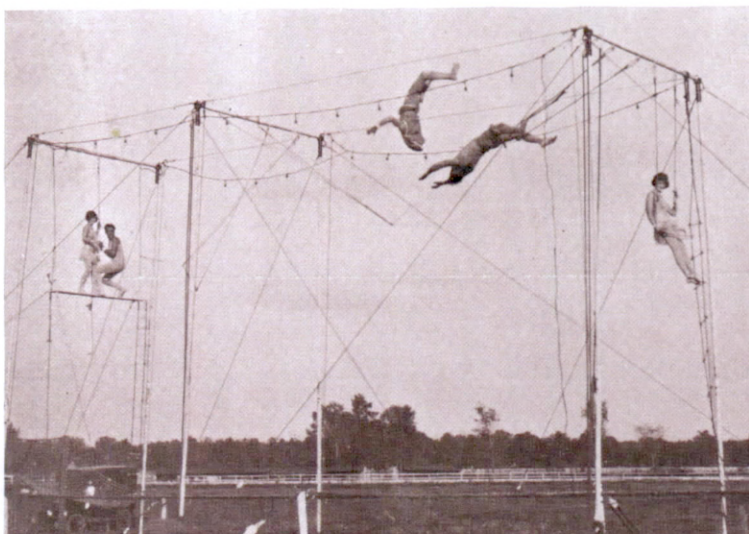
THE ABSOLUTE CLIMAX OF ALL AERIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

FIVE
PEOPLE

THREE
MEN

and

TWO
LADIES



Presenting

FOUR

DIFFERENT

DOUBLE

SOMER-
SAULTS

DOUBLE SOMERSAULT BLINDFOLDED AND ENCLOSED IN A SACK

Akron, Ohio.
August 2nd,
1-9-2-7.

Mr Zack Terrell. Mgr.
Sells Floto Show.
Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Dear Mr Terrell:-

I have your letter under date of August 1st, contents of same noted, in reply I received a letter from Mr Mugivan a few days ago informing me that he had sent my letter to you for consideration.

If you have heard from him as yet to your plans for the Season of 1928 I will be pleased to have your reply at your earliest regarding placing my Eight People Act, as I have a Fair Contract and am holding them off until I get a definite reply from you.

Please let me hear from you as soon as possible.

With all good wishes I am,

Very truly yours,

(WEEK AUGUST 8th, GEN DEL, SAC CITY, IOWA.)

Bob Fisher

BOB FISHER, MANAGER

707 E. OLIVE ST.

BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

PARKS

CIRCUSES

FAIRS

Some version of the Flying Fishers trapeze act was before the public for over half a century. Bob Fisher, born Robert Musselman, headed up one of 1927's variations, calling his troupe the Five Fearless Flyers. In the letter Zack Terrell, above, Fisher inquires if his act has been hired for the 1928 Sells Floto Circus tour. Performers often illustrated their stationary with an image of their act as Fisher did. In this case, the photograph gives a good idea of what the trapeze rigging looked like.

Announcing the Second Annual Stuart Thayer Prize Competition

\$500 Prize

To encourage the highest quality of research, scholarship and writing about American circus history, the Circus Historical Society announces the second Stuart Thayer Prize Competition. The award will go to the individual judged to have made the most significant contribution to the field of circus history in 2012.

In addition to the recognition, the winner will receive \$500.00.

This award is named in honor of Stuart L. Thayer (1926-2009), author of numerous books and articles about the antebellum American circus and menagerie.



*Stuart L. Thayer
(1926-2009)*

Eligibility

Content: A nominated work must be substantially about American circus history or a very closely related topic.

Format: Works may be in any printed form: book, article, pamphlet, booklet, bibliography, compendium of essays, exhibit catalogue, an essay that is part of a larger work, or an original work contained in digital format on a disk or downloaded on a permanent website.

Posthumous Publication: Works by deceased authors published posthumously for the first time are eligible for nomination. The prize shall be awarded to an immediate family member or closest survivor.

Exclusions: Exhibits, websites, symposiums, etc., that do not create a permanent document or are not archived in some permanent format are not eligible for nomination. Fictional works are not eligible. Re-printings and new editions of older works without annotation or other updating that substantially improve the work are not eligible. Virtual and digital library content are not eligible for nomination.

Release Date: A work published, issued or released in 2012 is eligible for nomination.

Nominators: Any member of the Circus Historical Society may nominate one or more works. Members may nominate their own work for the prize.

Nominations Submission: All nominations must be submitted using the nomination form. Each nomination must be signed and dated by the nominator.

Deadline: All nominations must be submitted no later than March 15, 2013. The winner will be announced at the 2013 CHS convention.

Complete details and the nomination form can be downloaded from the CHS website at
<www.circushistory.org/ThayerPrize.htm> or by writing:

Stuart Thayer Prize
c/o Maureen Brunsdale
8900 Milner Library, Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-8900

Spectacles of South Asia at the American Circus, 1890-1940

by Janet M. Davis

This article originally appeared in Visual Anthropology, Vol. 6, No. 2 in 1993.

In 1903, atop a richly-dressed elephant, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, crowned King Edward VII the new Emperor of India. Dubbed the Durbar (royal court) of Delhi, the ceremony contained hundreds of parading elephants, camels, horses, and Indian rajas and nawabs (princes). Lady Curzon (from Chicago) and the Duke and Duchess of Connaught also participated in this dramatic celebration of British imperialism. Delhi was the old Mughal capital of India: thus, by donning the accoutrements of Indian rulers in an imperial Indian setting, Lord Curzon implicitly invented an historical link between his own authority and the legacies of past rulers in India, such as the sixteenth-century Mughal emperor, Akbar.

A year later, in New York City, the Durbar of Delhi was transformed into an eighteen-minute circus sawdust spectacle under Barnum and Bailey's three-ring big top. In a lavish milieu of elephants and camels caparisoned in gold and silk, black and white American actors depicted South Asians and the English. Yet Delhi had now been transformed into Des Moines, or any one of hundreds of cities where Barnum and Bailey performed in 1904 and 1905.

Although India and the United States did not establish a direct political or economic relationship until after World War II, representations of India were constantly played out in performance at the American circus at the turn of the century. A central part of American popular culture, the circus showcased a gaudy conglomeration of South Asian animal and human images: Tippoo Sultan the elephant, "indolent" sacred cattle and sacred camels, "The Indian Rubber Man," and more.

The Golden Age of the American Circus

The American circus at the turn of the twentieth century was an integral part of American culture in an era before movies and television. Circus proprietors like James A. Bailey and Adam Forepaugh

marketed their shows in order to tap growing public curiosity about foreign lands, and about the relationship between human beings and animals. By bringing foreign cultures to one's doorstep, the circus could seemingly collapse physical and temporal boundaries—one did not need to travel around the world in order to see a hippopotamus, or a "Feejee Cannibal." Instead, the circus brought the rest of the world to one's hometown for the day.

Owing to its growing popularity, the American circus industry consolidated its financial power in the 1890s, and famous shows such as Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth became enormous transportable entertainment complexes. In 1910, the Ringling Brothers show and the Barnum and Bailey Circus each used eighty-four railway cars to transport their shows around the country, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show travelled with fifty-nine railway cars.¹ Approximately one hundred recognized circuses existed in this "golden age" of the American circus. In small towns across the United States, the arrival of the circus could bring daily life to a halt. In 1904, the small town of Ashland, Wisconsin, was temporarily transformed by the annual visit of the Barnum and Bailey Circus on August 18. According to the *Ashland Daily Press*: "All the roads brought in large train loads of people who came here to attend the circus and many people arrived last evening. All the mills on this side of the bay stopped work today noon and almost all business is at a standstill and everyone is taking in the circus."²

Circus proprietors proudly proclaimed that "all classes" of Americans attended the circus. Certainly all forms of popular entertainment made such claims during this period, which were generally little more than typical patriotic hyperbole about



Ethnological Congresses were major attractions on major circuses in the late nineteenth century. This Barnum and Bailey poster, printed by Strobridge, dates from 1894. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection.

America's democratic traditions. However, the historical evidence does suggest that enormous numbers of people from different classes attended the sprawling circuses that rumbled across the American landscape by railway.

The American circus entered its "golden age" during a period of enormous socio-economic turmoil, which was marked by depression, labor unrest, and overseas expansion into Latin America, the Pacific Islands, and Asia. It was no accident that the "golden age" of the circus coincided with the genesis of the American empire, because the circus's popularity reflected the changing world-view of its consumers. Scenes from America's new overseas empire acquired after the Spanish-American War in 1898 were immediately translated into live racial and animal images at the circus. Circus owners promoted their shows as "instructive" forums in which one could examine exotic beasts and human beings from countries like China, Cuba, and the Philippines, places where American investors, missionaries and traders were beginning to consolidate their capital and political control. In accordance with the Darwinian concept of an evolutionary hierarchy of animals, circus proprietors now displayed their exotic animals in tandem with vast so-called "ethnological congresses" of human beings from around the globe.

Unlike the international exposition, or world's fair, circuses did not remain stationary for months on end; instead, by the mid 1890s, they logged thousands of miles per year by rail, anywhere from San Francisco or Fresno to Boston or Lowell, and all the way down to Natchez, Mississippi.³ Whereas state fairs were inexorably tied to their location—states promoted these fairs in order to stimulate local

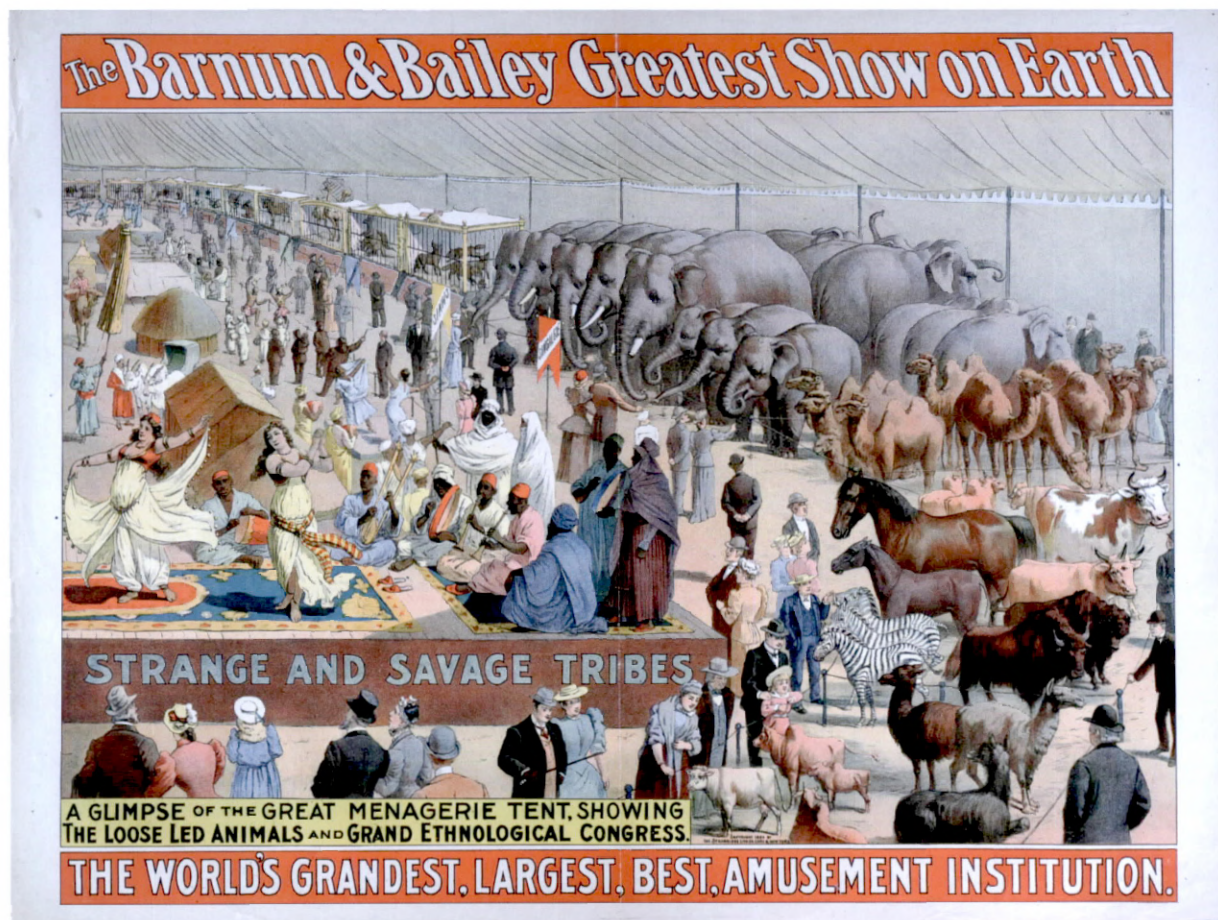
economies—the circus was not bound to any locale. The sprawling amusement parks which emerged in the 1890s, such as the triad of parks at Coney Island, Steeplechase, Luna, and Dreamland, contained many similarities to the circus: animal acts, clowns, and occasional human "exotica." Yet the amusement park, like the state fair, did not travel.⁴ These stationary forms of popular entertainment, like the state fairs, were tied to a local economy. But the peripatetic circus was unfettered by local loyalties in all respects. In order to appeal to a national audience, the circus promoted nationally recognizable themes which contained a heavy dose of American patriotism. These themes fused entertainment with Social Darwinism and the ideology of American exceptionalism.⁵

Orientalism, South Asia, and the Circus

American circus images of South Asia might seem, at first glance, irrelevant to American exceptionalism and concepts of empire, because India was Britain's "jewel in the crown." However, the circus proprietors' treatment of Indian culture reveals a consistent set of American attitudes about race and gender, and illuminates the relationship between America and Great Britain. As the United States consolidated its own regional empire in the Pacific, the Caribbean Basin, and parts of Latin America at the turn of the century, the British invested more capital in American foreign ventures than any other European core power. Thus the United States and Britain enjoyed a sort of informal alliance, based on strong cultural and economic ties. American circus spectacles (also known as historical dramas) concerning India implicitly sanctioned British imperial rule. As a "queer," "static" culture,

colonized India was depicted to be in need of "guidance" from a mature industrial power like Britain. Abstract concepts such as the Asiatic mode of production were played out in performance at the American circus, and have, over time, become an indelible part of the American imagination.

Owing to its production of repetitious images concerning race, gender, and American patriotism, the circus itself functioned as a popular discourse that reinforced the superiority of white "native" American (i.e. Anglo-American) culture and promoted American exceptionalism on the world stage. Over time, circus owners



Another image of Barnum and Bailey's Ethnological Congress in 1894, also printed by Strobridge. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection.

continued to reproduce successful circus acts in order to maximize profits. For example, *The Durbar of Delhi* later resurfaced as *The Durbar, India, Nepal, and Persia*.

Edward Said's work provides an analytic framework in which to place the American circus at the turn of the century. Said applies Michel Foucault's concept of a discourse to his own formulation of Orientalism, which, he asserts, grew out of English and French colonialism. Said defines Orientalism as a "systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically."⁶ The geographical space called the "Orient," or the "East," is itself a product of this discourse: the Orientalist lumps many vastly different groups of cultures under the appellation of the "Orient." Said argues that the United States did not become involved in the political affairs of the "Orient" until World War II, yet representations of the oriental Other were an integral part of American popular entertainment especially the circus, at the turn of the century. Circus proprietors created sprawling "ethnological congresses" composed of a constellation of ethnic and racial types: indistinguishable Arabs, Indians, Egyptians and Filipinos, who were hired to act out their "traditional" culture for the entertainment and education of the American consumer. American circus proprietors at the turn of the century can be classified as an adjunct to Said's Orientalist scholars, because they created, controlled and perpetuated a range of static stereotypes about the oriental Other. Asians and Middle Easterners were consistently represented in their "traditional" garb, performing "traditional" activities like snake-charming or sword-swallowing.

Ultimately the circus functioned as a sort of living text, melding consistent essentialized images concerning race, gender, and empire with live performance. According to the dance scholar, Jane Desmond, performance complicates the issue of representing the Other because the performer is simultaneously herself, or himself, and the character who is represented. One's identity as self and performer was thus constantly in the process of contestation at the circus.⁷ Circus owners problematized racial constructions of South Asians by using Anglo-American, Mexican and African American performers to represent South Asians.

South Asian Animals

Before the advent of the exotic animal trade in the middle of the nineteenth century, speculative sea captains often captured and sold wild animals from South Asia to fledgling American menageries.⁸

Circus and menagerie owners found that exotic animals were enormously profitable: a circus often measured its worth in terms of the numbers of elephants it possessed.⁹ The first elephant on American soil arrived in New York from Bengal in 1796. The first tigers arrived from Surat in 1806.¹⁰ In 1821, the ship *Bengal* carried the elephant Tippoo Sultan to America. The name Tippoo Sultan described a courageous potentate in southern India during the late eighteenth century who attempted (and eventually failed) to stop British expansion into southern India. In an American context,

Tipu Sultan had been transformed into a docile circus elephant, devoid of his earlier significance.

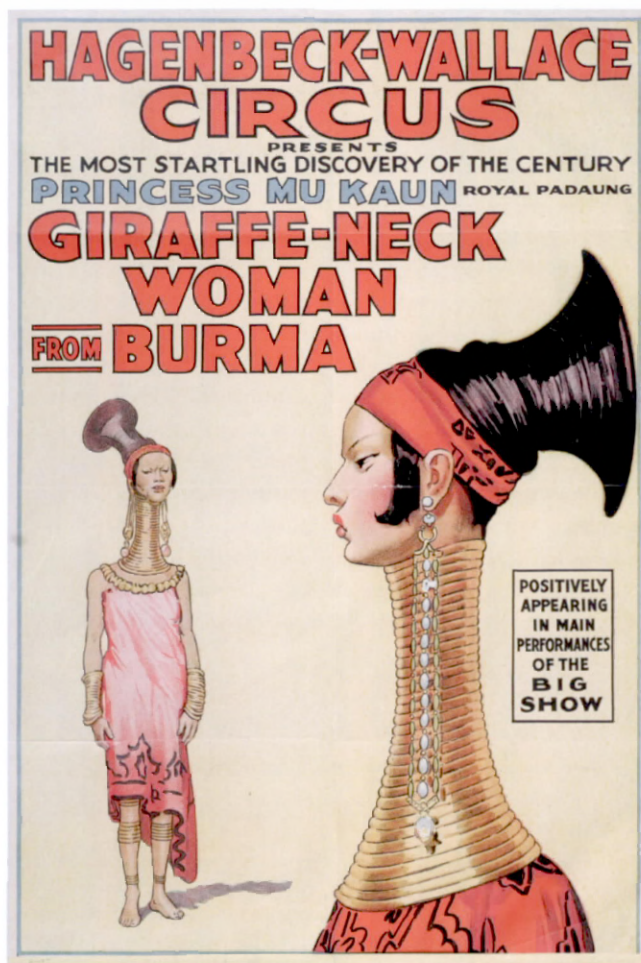
In general, the elephant and other animals from South Asia served as the organizing principle for South Asian images at the American circus. Spectacles and sideshow attractions featuring other areas of the globe also contained masses of brown (or painted brown) people dressed in scant, filmy clothing, participating in colossal royal ceremonies or ancient forms of agriculture. However, South Asian circus images were easily recognizable because of their unchanging animal landscape. Elephants were an integral part of all South Asian performances, from the *Durbar of Delhi* to "Bombayo the Man from India." The South Asian backdrop at the American circus also included the tiger, palm tree, cow, or the occasional "sacred" white camel. South Asian people were identifiable to an American audience when physically juxtaposed with animals from their native land. Spectacles of South Asia at the American circus played out the popular idea of a racial hierarchy of human beings and animals. Inextricably linked to an agrarian context, and surrounded by animals, South Asian people were depicted as unable to keep

pace with the Anglo-American "race."¹¹

Gender Under the Big Top

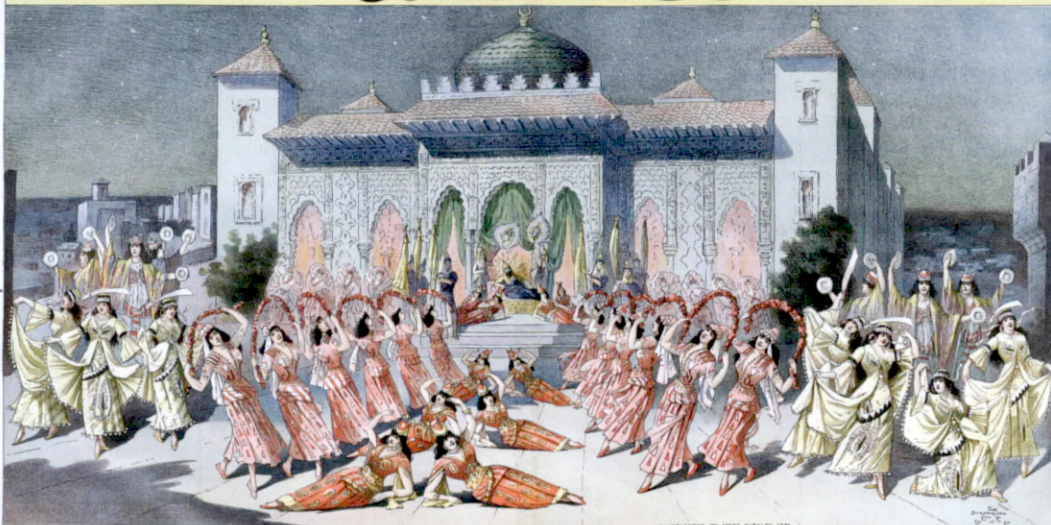
Representations of South Asian female gender at the circus were inextricably linked to constructions of race. White Anglo-American women generally were depicted there as virtuous Victorians. Yet women of color (or white women depicting women of color) were usually portrayed to be human freaks or sexually-charged veiled mysteries. For example, in 1934, the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus presented "the most startling discovery of the century," a "Giraffe-neck Woman from Upper Burma" named Princess Mu Kaun, who was displayed under the big top during an intermission between acts.¹²

The "oriental" dancing girl (who was almost always played by



The Giraffe Neck Women from Burma were a feature on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1934. Poster printed by Central Print and Illinois Litho. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection

The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth
IMRE KIRALFY'S COLUMBUS AND THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.



A PERFECT MIRROR OF THE ANCIENT GLORIES AND PASTIMES OF THE MOORS OF GRANADA. DAZZLING AND BEWILDERING SCENES OF PAST ORIENTAL SPLENDORS WITH ROYAL FETES AND ENCHANTING AND BEWILDERING BALLETS BEFORE KING BOABDIL EL CHICO.

THE WORLD'S GRANDEST, LARGEST, BEST, AMUSEMENT INSTITUTION.

The Spanish female dancers were Orientized in this 1892 Barnum and Bailey Columbus spec poster, printed by Strobridge. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection.

a white woman) was a stock character in the circus. During the free parade before the show, "shapely oriental dancing girls" swathed in sexy, billowy dress, depicted slaves; and often sat on top of the animal cages, juxtaposing the exotic caged animal with the caged human. The oriental dancing girl looked identical in all "oriental" cultural representations at the circus: the same oriental dancing girls reclined across the arena in *Columbus and the Discovery of America* as in *The Wizard Prince of Arabia*, which featured a "Dazzling, dancing scene, in the mighty, wordless play combining the weird wizardry of India and Arabia, in opulent Oriental grandeur." Yet these women being represented were often supposedly from sexually conservative Muslim countries (including parts of South Asia) in which women had to cover their faces and feet according to the tenets of the *Shari'a* (Islamic

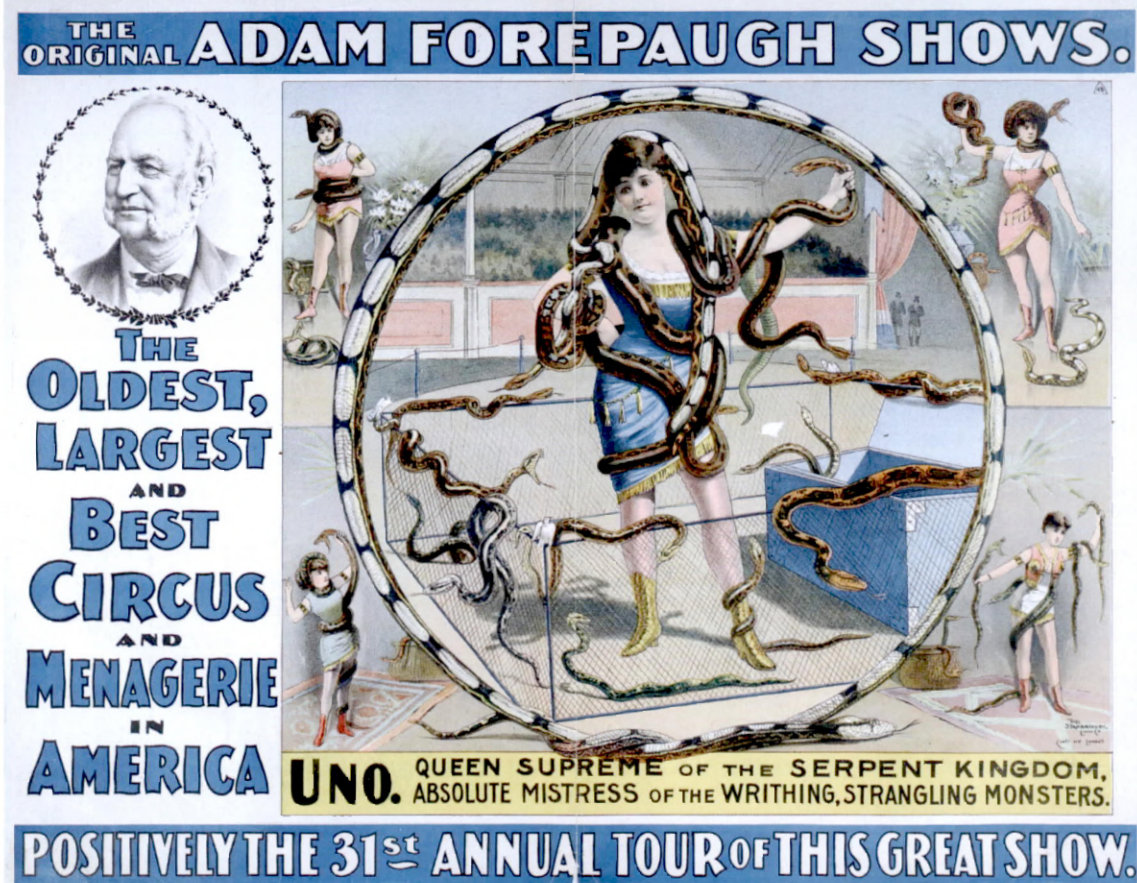
law).

By the turn of the century, snake charming had become a woman's job in the side show. As a non-skilled position, snake charming was commonly performed by side show managers' wives.¹³ Scantly clad white women, such as "Uno, Queen Supreme of the Serpent Kingdom," wore heavy make-up to render them exotic, and draped a limp collection of boa constrictors and indigenous snakes across their bodies—a far cry from male South Asian snake charmers whose rituals were originally intended for religious purposes.

Unlike the sexually-focused constructions of female gender, representations of South Asian males were devoid of sexuality, and instead, focused on "magical" and esthetic

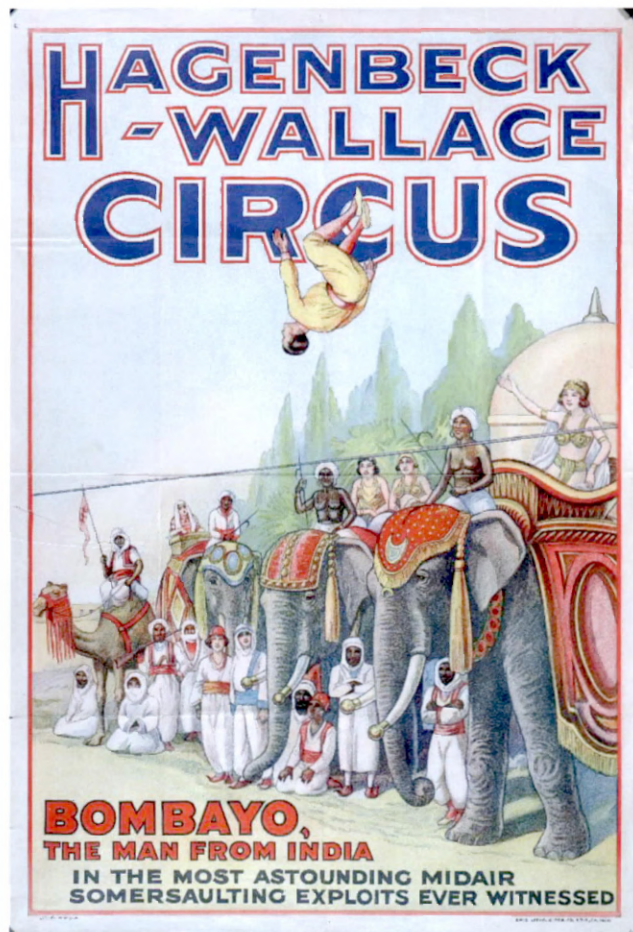


This Strobridge poster for the *Wizard Prince of Arabia* conflated India and Arabian culture, and wildly misrepresented conservative Muslim mores. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection.



This 1894 Strobbridge poster for the Forepaugh Circus featured the stereotypical female snake charmer. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection.

powers, much in the same manner as *sadhus* were depicted in other arenas of American popular culture.¹⁴ A Mexican man, billed as “Blacaman: The Hindu Animal Hypnotist,” performed in 1938 with the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus. In the lithography, Blacaman was bodiless, unlike the naked, lithe images of the female body at the circus. Bushy, bearded and robed, Blacaman’s “orbs seem to penetrate . . . like an X-ray,” while he stunned roosters, crocodiles and lions with his gaze.¹⁵ Likewise, the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus featured “Bombayo, the Man from India” in 1934. Bombayo performed “Astounding somersaulting Exploits on a Bounding Rope” and flipped with ease from elephant to elephant.¹⁶ Both bouncy Bombayo and Blacaman the Mexican-cum-Hindu “fakir” represented an ascetic, athletic construction of South Asian male gender at the American circus, which mirrored American imagery of the Hindu ascetic: a chaste, strangely athletic contortionist who possessed an uncanny ability to communicate with animals.



Spectacles

Images of India as a museum were played out in the enormous circus spectacle. The spectacle, or historical drama, became the trademark of the American circus and Wild West show during the 1890s. In its formative years, the spectacle featured fictional escapist fare which stressed romance or violence. For example, the melodrama, *Lallah Rookh's Departure from Delhi*, produced in 1881, was based on Thomas Moore's romantic poem of the same name published in 1817. The mythical Lalla Rookh, a beautiful daughter of the Emperor of Delhi, leaves to meet her beloved and betrothed sultan perched on top of an elephant.¹⁷ Playing the lead of *Lallah Rookh*, Louise Montague, a white woman, was also billed as the “10,000 Dollar Beauty” at the Adam Forepaugh circus during the 1880s. Although this spectacle certainly romanticized and exoticized South Asia, it was not intended to serve as actual history, unlike the spectacles at the turn of the century. The lithograph advertising the show portrayed Indian architecture to be romantic with crumbling Greco-Roman ruins surrounded by towering, omnipresent elephants and flowers. All of the hundreds of faces were fair skinned, and the human bodies were cloaked in willowy Roman robes.

Given the tremendous popularity of the ethnological villages at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and other world's fairs, circus

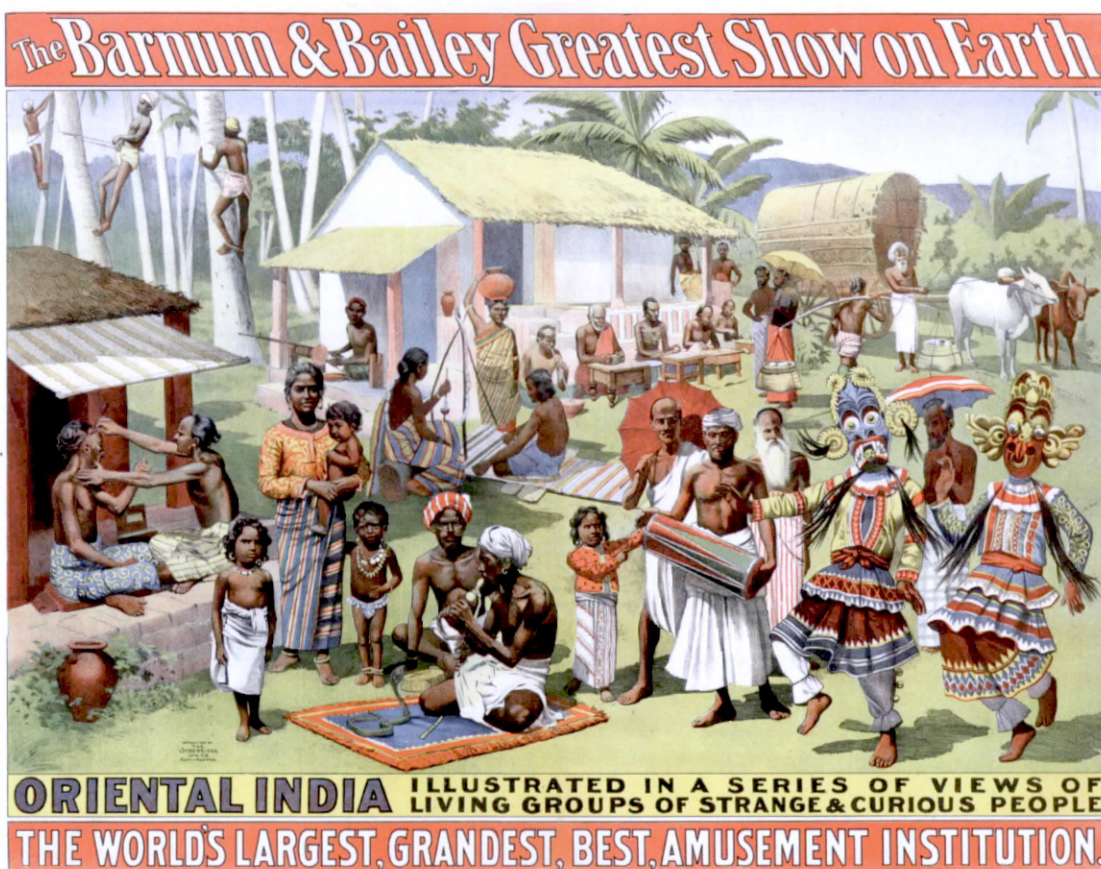
The Indian origins of Bombayo, a slack wire artist, were emphasized in this 1934 poster printed by Erie Lithograph. John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Tibbals Collection

owners now assumed that “realistic” scenes from other lands would also sell well at the circus. As a contrast to *Lallah Rookh*, Barnum and Bailey’s *Oriental India* in 1896 attempted to depict daily life in India. The “series and views of living groups of strange and curious people” illustrated “Eastern home life and occupations revealed to Christian eyes.” *Oriental India* crammed a plethora of “typical” (i. e. stereotypical) Indian characters into one small space: the male snake charmer, a man smoking *bhang* (marijuana) from a water pipe, ubiquitous jeweled elephants, scantily-clad men climbing trees, slave drivers, Hindus praying, masked South Indian dancers, man tending his sacred cattle, and women making textiles while caring for semi-nude children. One only had to travel to the circus grounds, not to India and Ceylon, to see South Asians supposedly engaged in daily life.

The *Oriental India* spectacle depicted Indians in native dress, engaged in “traditional” activities, a static, timeless collection of images that amplified the Anglo-American sense of racial difference and racial evolution. *Oriental India* promoted the Hegelian idea of India as a dead (yet noble) civilization that stood outside the pale of industrial progress. However, during the late nineteenth century, the British employed enormous numbers of Indians in the British factory system which stretched throughout the British empire: Indians worked in huge new textile mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad, and were transported to Malaysia in order to work as rubber tappers on British



The Forepaugh show featured the spec *Lallah Rookh* throughout the 1880s. This poster, printed by Avil of Philadelphia, probably dates from 1887. Circus World Museum Collection.



In 1896 Barnum and Bailey presented featured groups of “strange & curious” Indians in its menagerie. Poster by Strobridge. Circus World Museum Collection.

rubber plantations. In Uganda, Kenya, and other British colonies in Africa, Indian work gangs built railroads under brutal working conditions. But not surprisingly this transformation of Indian labor under British imperialism was never a part of the American circus spectacle, which simply represented India as an immutable cultural landscape that was fixed in an ancient "Asiatic" mode of production. *Oriental India* was exhibited in conjunction with a series of statuary paintings that augmented the image of Indian culture itself as a painting, composed of immobile agrarian images which could be easily represented in any cultural context. The omnipresence of Indian cultural images at the circus reflected more than new American curiosity about faraway lands. According to the historian T. J. Jackson Lears, during the so-called "age of confidence" at the turn of the twentieth century many American intellectuals reacted to enormous socio-economic change by appropriating personal meaning from medieval, "oriental" and "primitive" cultures. In essence, these elites articulated an anti-modern response to modernism.¹⁸ The circus's sentimental depiction of India as stagnant yet noble popularized this current intellectual trend. India was essentialized as a closely-knit agrarian society—a far cry from the growing alienation of industrial urban culture in America.¹⁹ However, the image of romantic and stagnant India was equally a product of American assumptions about Anglo-Saxon racial hegemony. India would simply wither away without the enlightened, paternal hand of British "progress".

Likewise, Barnum and Bailey's *Durbar of Delhi* demonstrated (in a dramatic setting) tacit American approval for British imperialism in India. The Barnum and Bailey program vividly described the "splendid" scene: "[T]here is a troop of native soldiers riding upon lofty, swaying camels and preceded by the mystic priests of Buddha, leading the sacred zebus and the sacrificial cattle; there is a prince of Siam with his retinue of warriors and shapely oriental dancing girls. . . . There is a brief halt while the Potentates of the Indian kingdoms pay their tribute to the Imperial power. Then once more the procession moves on; the royal elephants join the pageant and the long line of splendour disappears through the parted curtains of that unknown land of mystery where the artists prepare for the feats



Another Strobridge bill of Indian home life and occupations on Barnum and Bailey in 1896. Circus World Museum Collection

of the arena.²⁰

The *Durbar and Delhi* also reinforced the British myth of the compliant and passive Indian who welcomed British rule. With its images of hundreds of Indians bowing to British authority, the *Durbar of Delhi* helped popularize the common colonialist stereotype that only a tiny minority of British officials was needed to rule millions of Indians. In reality, however, the Indian nationalist movement had already begun by 1885, with the formation of the Indian National Congress.²¹ The image of timeless tranquility in India promoted by the circus spectacle clearly contradicted contemporary events, yet remained enormously popular with the American public.

The age of the elaborate spectacle ended around 1918, when these productions became prohibitively expensive. Celluloid film was now becoming a more cost-effective (and increasingly popular) entertainment medium than the spectacle, which cost a great deal of money both to transport and to perform repeatedly; thus circus spectacles gradually shrank into smaller reproductions of older shows. By 1915, the audience who had enjoyed the sprawling historical spec was now sitting in a fancy movie hall watching D. W. Griffith's full-length historical feature, *Birth of a Nation*. In order to enhance the movie representations of foreign lands, architects infused their ornate movie palaces, built in the 1910s and 1920s, with an elaborate frenzy of diverse architectural motifs—blending Hindu, Mughal, Persian, Arabic, Chinese, and Greco-Roman styles under one roof.²²

Legacies

Circus images of India from the turn of the century have remained a pervasive part of the American imagination. Today, at Donald Trump's garish casino in Atlantic City, the Taj Mahal, female employees wear suggestive, glittery costumes, similar to Barbara Eden's garb on the 1960s situation comedy *I Dream of Jeannie*. In a sappy love story about a sassy robot, the 1986 film *Short Circuit*, featured a white American actor, Fisher Stevens, who was painted brown, and dressed in *khadi* in order to play a quirky, bumbling Indian scientist. The permeability of racial representations in performance is certainly not limited to constructions of South Asia. During the Ayatollah Khomeini's fundamentalist Shi'ia revolution in Iran, the Iron Sheikh of Iran became a stock villain in the World Wrestling Federation's cast of phony grapplers. However, during the recent Gulf War, the Iron Sheikh quickly became an Iraqi.²³

The American media continues to represent South Asia and the rest of the developing world as a bizarre ethnological congress of humans and animals. For example, on September 17, 1990, in a rare report on South Asia, the *Wisconsin State Journal* noted, "Indian Animals Want Work. . . . Dozens of growling bears and chattering monkeys were paraded by Prime Minister V. P. Singh's home Wednesday to protest a government ban on animal street shows. Snakes in their baskets were taken on the two-mile march that caused traffic jams and even some panic."²⁴ Few American newspapers contain comprehensive coverage of politics in South Asia, or of socio-economic issues; instead, fragmented snippets consistently represent South Asia as a side-show. Modern depictions of South Asia are filled with Darwinian images of teeming populations, which are controlled only through natural selection—typically a cyclone, mudslide, famine, or bus wreck. Tiny news blurbs briefly detail a thousand faceless deaths. The circus provided the American public with its first live glimpses of the Other, and to this day the racial discourse of the circus still continues to inform images of South Asia, transforming human beings into human animals. BW

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Endnotes

1. Robert H. Gollmar, *My Father Owned a Circus* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1965), 49.
2. *Ashland Daily Press*, 1904.
3. The larger circuses produced route books at the end of each season which served as a daily diary of the tour, detailing the location and number of performances, unusual incidents, audiences, and providing notes about employees. In addition to providing the show's route information, the route books contained lists of big top and sideshow performers for a given season. The advent of railroad travel for the big circuses tremendously increased the length of their routes. In the age of the railroad circus, bigger shows could perform coast to coast in a season, and stop at scores of little towns on the way.
4. In his illuminating analysis of Coney Island, John Kasson argues that the proliferation of large amusement parks at the turn of the century serves as the best barometer of an emergent mass culture which rejected middle-class manners and taste in favor of interactive and bawdy (albeit controlled) fun. Although Kasson carefully details the influence of the 1893 Columbia Exposition in Chicago upon the development of Coney Island, he fails to note that other forms of mass entertainment like the circus, Wild West show, and international exposition, were equally important

in the development of American mass culture, and in shaping the displays at Coney Island. Unlike Burton Benedict, Robert Rydell and myself, Kasson does not link the American public's growing fascination with foreign cultures (on display at Coney Island) with the concurrent growth of American imperialism. Burton Benedict, *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915*, (Berkeley: Scholar Press, 1983). Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984). John E. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

5. I define "Social Darwinism" as an application of Darwin's theory of natural selection to human society. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, concepts of the "survival of the fittest" and animal evolution were both applied to human beings. The term "American exceptionalism" refers to a national consensus of American greatness, based upon America's unique history (i.e., compared to monarchical Europe) of republicanism and liberal democracy, coupled with its seemingly limitless supply of land and raw materials.

6. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3.

7. Jane Desmond, "Dancing Out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's 'Radha' of 1906," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 17, no. 1 (1991), 28-49. Several other scholars have discussed the symbiosis between race and gender. See Deborah A. Poole, "A One-Eyed Gaze: Gender in 19th Century Illustrations of Peru," *Dialectical Anthropology*, 13 (1988), 333-364. Many other scholars explore the symbiosis of race and gender. See Peggy Pascoe, "Race, Gender, and Intercultural Relations: The Case of Interracial Marriage," *Frontiers*, 12 (Autumn, 1991), 5-32; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Henry Louis Gates, Jr. ed., "Race," *Writing, and Difference* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, trans. Myrna and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

8. W. C. Coup, *Sawdust and Spangles: Stories and Secrets of the Circus* (Chicago: Herbert S. Stone and Company, 1901), 139.

9. Earl Chapin May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962), 94.

10. Stuart Thayer, "One Sheet: Early History of the Menagerie in America, 1798 to 1833," *Bandwagon*, September-October 1974, 23.

11. Ronald Inden comment on Janet Davis's conference paper, 21st Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, November 7, 1992.

12. Hagenbeck-Wallace, *Circus Magazine and Daily Review*, (Louisville: Louisville Color Gravure Company, Inc., 1934), 27.

13. Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 256.

14. Narayan, Kirin. *Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels: Folk Narrative in Hindu Religious Teaching*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

15. Anonymous. "A Fakir's Mystic Eye Tames Savage Beasts," *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, January 15, 1939, 6.

16. Hagenbeck-Wallace, *Circus Magazine and Daily Review* (Louisville: Louisville Color Gravure Company, Inc., 1934), 30.

17. Stuart Thayer, "The Oriental Influence on the American Circus," *Bandwagon*, September-October 1973, 20-23.

18. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1800-1920*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

19. The American reception to the Indian ascetic, Swami Vivekananda, serves as another example in support of Lears' thesis. Many Americans became interested in Hinduism after Vivekananda spoke at the World Parliament of Religions at the Columbia Exposition in 1893. While in the United States, Vivekananda founded the Vedanta Society in 1895, a religious organization which promoted a holistic, non-dualistic faith based on the tenets of the Hindu scriptures, known collectively as the Vedas.

20. Barnum and Bailey, *Greatest Show on Earth. Book of Wonders and Official Program, Season of 1905*, second ed., (Buffalo: Courier Company, 1905).

21. The Indian National Congress was composed of well-educated, high-caste Hindus, Parsis, a few Britons and Muslims from all provinces of British India. At its inception, the Congress declared its loyalty to the British Crown, and demanded that Indians be granted a larger role in governing India. After Lord Curzon randomly partitioned Bengal into two separate provinces in 1905 (which sparked a national outcry) the Congress began to champion Indian independence.

22. Ben M. Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: The Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc, 1961), 102.

23. Jeremy Solomon, *Professional Wrestling: An Exploration*, 1991.

[Unpublished paper in Janet Davis's possession.]

24. State Journal Staff. "Indian Animals Want Work", *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 17, 1990, 11A.

Chasing the Cash across the Continent



by Earl Chapin May

Charles Sparks reputedly said something along the lines of: "Any fool can frame a circus; it's the smart showman who knows where to put it." Drawing on the experience and expertise of Charles and John Ringling, this article explores the complex question of where and when to exhibit. It originally appeared in July 1923 issue of *Success* magazine.

A word about the pictures. Acrobat and clown Pete Mardo parlayed his hobby of photography into a cottage industry in the 1920s. Gathering together images he took during the tour, he created photo albums that he sold to fellow performers and other circus personnel at the season's end, usually identifying each picture in white ink on the cheap black scrapbook paper on which he pasted his prints. He compiled a number of these tomes while on Ringling-Barnum in the 1920s. Since photos of Big Bertha in the 1920s are surprisingly sparse, his pictures are one of the main sources of visual documentation of the show during that period. All the images used in this article are from his 1923 effort, the original of which is in Pfening Archives.

Charles and John Ringling sat at their office desks in Madison Square Garden, New York, casually opening the afternoon mail. In the room to their right the giraffes, pythons and monkeys shared space with an exhibit of freaks. Ascending a stairway back of

them were the sounds and smells from thirty or forty dens of wild animals gathered from the four quarters of the globe. From the Garden, proper, came the music of the circus band sending happy thrills up and down the spines of eight thousand youths of all ages. Scattered about the Garden, at the Bridgeport winter quarters, and elsewhere, fifteen hundred employees of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows went calmly about their business of manufacturing and selling amusement to the great American public.

The big show had opened its annual exhibition season.

When the chilly rains of April had passed, the circus would forsake the protecting roof of the Garden and take to the road under tents. Before it returned to winter quarters it would have traveled from Coast to Coast, from Canada to Carolina—over a route almost fifteen thousand miles long.

At this late day we can take for granted the ability of the House of Ringling to manufacture a product that will appeal to the amusement-loving public. The circus is a complicated mixture of novelty and tradition, of acrobatics, slapstick comedy, glittering spectacle, strange animals—and yet not too strange—alluring and alliterative adjectives, festive sounds and sights and smells. The American public demands both quantity and quantity. These elements have to be mixed in exactly the right proportions and can bet your last seventy-five cents that the Ringling boys know the recipe.

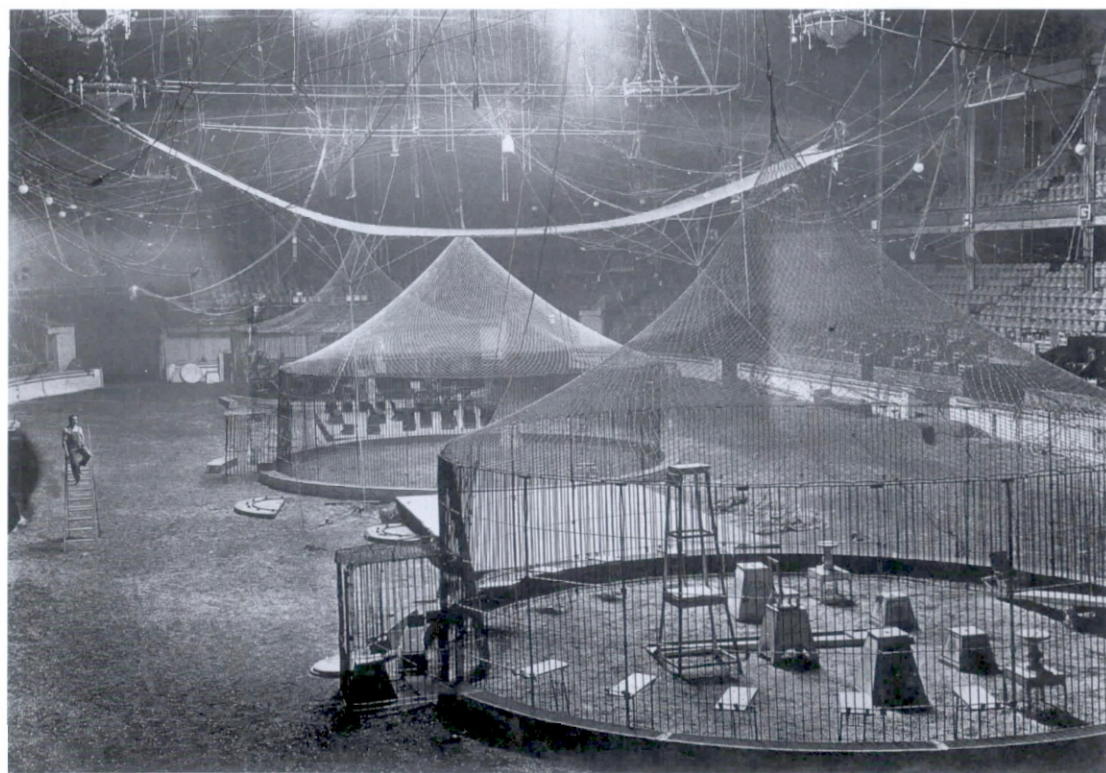
John's Bump of Location

Yes, but how do they know where to take their show? They're not in business entirely for their health; how can they tell which of the four hundred and fifty possible markets on this continent will yield them the biggest profit on their goods? This year and every year?

One of the most ticklish questions for a circus man to answer is that most familiar one, "Where do you go from here?"

John and Charles have studied the subject for nearly half a century and they have acquired a unique combination of experience and intuition that enables them to solve this problem. John, they say, can stick his hand out of a Pullman window on a dark night and tell within fifteen miles where he is just by the feel of the air. John's cranium has all impressive bump of location. Maybe this is one of the reasons why, for thirty-eight consecutive years the

Three cage acts ready for performance at Madison Square Garden.



*Ringling-Barnum reserve
seat ticket wagon.*

Ringlings have not had a losing season.

What an amazing instinct for the circus business this family has! When they were kids in McGregor, Iowa, and their father ran a harness shop they played circus in the backyard, just as other kids do and always will. Only they never got over it. They eventually became showmen, and gradually, each of them gravitated to his proper niche in circus life. After the first few

experimental years, during which they played in school houses, at country fairs and village celebrations, they found that they owned a small wagon show and that Al, the eldest, was the ring-master; Otto, the treasurer; Alf T., the sideshow manger; Charles, general manager; Gus in charge of the advance or billposting brigade; Henry, general utility man, and John was the general advance agent—the man who routed the show.

As Ringling Brothers grew into a great railroad show and eventually took over the Sells Brothers show, the Forepaugh show and in 1909 [1907], the Barnum & Bailey show, some of the Ringlings had to take on a variety of jobs. But John's particular job was always that of routing the shows and that is still his specialty now that he and Charles are the only surviving brothers. So John has to his credit more experience in finding the money for a tented show than any living man.

Experience is an important factor. The showmen know what certain towns have done for them in years gone by, and under what conditions. They also know, from information, what those towns and many other towns have done for other tented shows, and under what conditions. They know the population, type of inhabitants, character of the basic industries, and the official and public attitude toward the circus business of every town of more than five thousand in the United States and Canada. They also know whether a circus lot is obtainable, at what price, at what distance from the railroad, whether it is apt to be wet or dry in rainy weather and a dozen other salient, vital facts about that town.

Much of this information is card indexed. Most of it the showmen carry in their heads.

*Ringling-Barnum
midway with sideshow
banners on right.*



Naturally the Ringlings continue the year around to make a careful study and analysis of trade or business conditions. They must get enough business in six or seven months to cover an operating cost or overhead of not less than twelve thousand dollars per day during seven months and to make enough profit to pay for winter upkeep and for yearly replacement and repairs, and a reasonable net profit on a plant which has a cash replacement value of more than two million dollars. That is,

if it became necessary for them to go into the open market today and buy such a show as they have—supposing such a thing to be possible—it would cost far in excess of two million.

Springtime in the East

Sometimes the Ringlings seem to go more by intuition than by information in routing their show.

Early in 1922 commercial reports from the Pacific Coast were fairly satisfactory but there was little in reports on the outdoor amusement business there to encourage the owners of a two-million-dollar circus plant to try their fortunes in that territory. Railroad rates are much higher in western than they are in eastern territory, jumps much longer, good show towns fewer in number. Yet the Ringlings went to the Pacific Coast that fall and in one month of exhibitions from Bellingham, Washington, to San Diego, California, added one more to their collection of fortunes. They had a "hunch" that the time was ripe for the big show to tour the Pacific Coast again.

Not only must the successful showman know what cities are "good show towns," but also just when in the season to play them. It is customary to play the eastern towns in the early spring,



because the great factory pay rolls are more or less independent of crop conditions. If the eastern mills are running, the east is "good territory" in the spring, and, perhaps, the safest territory to play for a big show.

Boston should be played, if possible, during the week of Bunker Hill Day, June 17th. The Bostonians seem at that period to be in an especially circusy mood. Boston is an excellent show town, so is Washington—one of the best for its size on the continent. St. Louis is a good show town in the spring, but not so good in the summer or fall. Cincinnati is good in the spring, too, but here another element enters. The lot there is low and if the season is wet the show is in danger of getting stuck in the mud. When the weather gets hot in those river towns, the public prefers to amuse itself in the parks rather than beneath a circus tent. Memphis and all cotton towns are "fall towns."

With the growth of the automobile industry Detroit has become a good circus town, especially in July. Chicago is a great circus town; so are Baltimore and many other cities. Kansas City used to be excellent almost any time of the year; it has not been so good recently. Why? Possibly because it has been showed too much. There are several big places which are not as good as they used to be. Ten years ago a circus would stay twice as long in San Francisco as in Los Angeles. Now the rule is reversed.

Michigan's Sore Thumb

The tides of industry ebb and flow and the circus goes with the tide. On the thumb of Michigan between Lake Superior and Keweenaw Bay—a thumb about fifty miles long and twenty miles wide—more than a quarter million well-paid people lived in good copper times. It was great show territory in those days, but there hasn't been enough money in that thumb of land to tempt the big fellows for many seasons. It has become a small show territory; some day with copper booming, it might become a big show stand. On the other hand, the recent development of the Panhandle country in Texas and the oil boom, have put new circus country upon the Ringling map.

Once it was the rule to play the same town every other year; now the big circus plays the large cities year after year with increasing business. But most of the smaller shows still favor the alternate year plan.

Logically, coal towns are good spring towns, for the miners usually work through the winter and are idle much of the summer—especially the soft coal territory. The generally accepted rule is that the show first in the coal town gets the best money.

Once into territory more dependent upon crops there are certain rules which must be followed, especially if the circus has to make some smaller towns to "break the jump" between larger ones. The wheat harvest is watched with particular care. The circus must play the "wheat towns" either just before or just after the harvest. If the circus played a wheat territory during the harvest it would not draw a profitable business.

Playing the wheat territory is almost as ticklish a business as playing the wheat market. It is comparatively easy for circus men to keep tabs on general business conditions through commercial reports, but the weather—the great gamble in the circus business—absolutely controls the timing of the wheat harvest.

Circus railroad contracts are made from three months to a month before the circus dates. The billposting is usually begun three weeks in advance of the show. It is always possible—but usually expensive—to "switch" a route or change a date on short notice. Roughly speaking a circus should play Kansas and Nebraska towns from July 4th to 15th, the Dakotas and Minnesota from July 15th to 25th, and western Canada from August 8th to 15th. The Ringlings played Winnipeg on August 9th, Saskatoon, August 12th, and Calgary, August 15th, last season to capacity business. Had they been in there a week earlier or a week later the story might have been quite different.

Remember always that this manufacturer has to sell his goods for

If you owned a factory having a cash replacement value of \$2,000,000, had to erect it, manufacture your product and sell it at retail for cash, tear down your plant and move it a hundred miles each day, how would you go about it? How would you find your daily market and show your annual profit?

This is the problem met each circus season by Ringling Brothers. They meet it under all sorts of climatic, industrial and political conditions. They must make enough money during six or seven months of activity to cover interest on investment,

cash on the very day he lays them down in any particular market. There's a depth of meaning in the old circus ballyhoo cry: "We're here to-day and gone to-morrow." Circusmen either get their money the day they are "here" or don't get it at all.

Therefore the southern states should be toured in October and late September. Although cotton is no longer absolute monarch down in Dixie, local commercial conditions reflect the condition of the cotton crop.

Ringling-Barnum cook house.



five or six months of non-productiveness and expensive winter upkeep, and 25 per cent annual depreciation, repairs and replacement.

They manufacture and retail amusement in a plant whose location is changed at least 125 times during the production season. From the beginning to the close of this production season this circus travels about 15,000 miles. The question, "Were do you go from here?" is one of the hardest that the showmen have to solve. The Ringlings solve it by experience, information, and intuition.

Moreover, the darky field hands, who are good circus patrons if fortune permits, are not provident and nothing makes a southern darky more peevish than to have a circus delay its coming until the cotton money is all gone.

The Pacific Coast yields more shekels if toured in September; under normal conditions Iowa and Illinois seem to produce better business if showed in August. Summer resort towns should not be showed before July first or after September first. There are forty other generally accepted rules about playing certain territories, but like all good rules they are mainly made to be broken. For the tune is played with constant variation.

Strikes of all kinds are dreaded by the travelling circus. In its early days, a big mill strike in Lowell, or Lawrence, Massachusetts, might make those stands better for the circus, because all labor would be at liberty and would have some spending money. But after such a strike has continued for a few weeks the circus sidesteps the strike-affected town, if it can. In times of great coal strikes the circuses try to stay out of coal territory. The railroad strike is the strike that raises most havoc with the circus owner. There were some rapid changes in routing by all circuses during the railroad strike of 1922. The Ringlings did a lot of extra jumping through southern territory last fall. The big show played east from Dallas, Texas, into and through Arkansas and Louisiana, then back west to San Antonio, Texas, then back east to New Orleans—doubling on its route.

A wreck ahead of the circus train may cause the show to "lose the stand." Finally, and at all times, circus business is more sensitive to local weather conditions than that of any department store. The Ringlings have played in three successive weeks of rain, during part of which time the show was not even unloaded from the cars. On the contrary, during all of last season, from the time the big show left Madison Square Garden May first until it closed the season at Greensboro, North Carolina, November first—approximately one hundred and twenty-five days of exhibition under canvas—they had only three days of rain. That's where

luck comes in!

One of the Ringlings greatest problems is to find a lot large enough to spread their twelve acres of canvas within easy transportation distance of a city's center of population. They were unable to show Brooklyn and Jersey City this season because the lots they used to pitch on in those cities have been cut up and built upon. The increase in motor cars has taken some of the load off the local street car lines and they are able to pitch their tents farther from the center of the town, but they must stay within two miles haul of the tracks, where the circus trains are "spotted."

Sometimes a change in conditions works both ways. The cost of circus railway hauls is about twice what it was before the war. But the improvement in rails, roadbed and motive power—and discontinuing of the morning street parade—permit the Ringlings to move their show much farther each night than they used to. They must, because of the great size of the show, select the larger cities whenever possible but the fact that they move one hundred double-length cars in four trains gives them a great advantage, in the matter of time.

The Motor Car Helps

Their first train, called the "flying squadron," carries the cook house, stables, tableau wagons, cages and stake and chain gang. This train leaves town about eleven o'clock at night and gets into the next town about four o'clock in the morning. The other sections leave about an hour apart. So by the time the second section reaches the new town the first section has been unloaded and the cookhouse is ready to serve breakfast and the stables are ready for the horses. With smaller shows all the show property is loaded on one train so that the cookhouse and stables and other first essentials on a circus lot must wait for all the rest of the equipment.

There has been a great increase in the cost of circus labor equipment and daily supplies, during the past few years. At the same time two factors, each revolutionary, have contributed to the increased attendance upon American circuses. The motor car has supplemented the railroad in a remarkable degree. Circuses used to have to depend for out-of-town business almost entirely upon the railroads—for the farmer's buggy and box wagon had an operating distance of less than twenty miles. Out-of-town customers were practically limited to the afternoon performance.



Sleepers beside Mount Shasta, California.

Now the farmers and the villagers for forty miles around the city where the circus exhibits can stay at home and attend to their business during the afternoon; and after supper, hitch up the motor car and spurt for the circus grounds. In the Middle West, where the evening performance used to be sparsely attended, the circus now often gets more business at night than in the afternoon, especially in smaller towns.

There are little towns in the far west, Idaho, Montana and Canada, where the citizens cheerfully motor a hundred miles to see a circus. A few seasons ago the big show went fifty miles out of its way between Sioux City and Omaha to play Norfolk, Nebraska, with a population of about eight thousand. The big top, seating fifteen thousand, was filled twice that day in Norfolk. The motor car made that possible. Concordia is a northern Kansas town of six thousand. The big show played there one day to thirty thousand people—most of whom reached Concordia by motor car.

Postville Makes History

Sometimes sizeable towns are too far apart for a week-night jump and some small town gets the show because it is a good stopping-off place. Not long ago [1915] the Ringlings played Postville, Iowa, a village which has fewer people than the circus population. To the showman's mind Postville was to be merely a "feeding station," a place to stop the trains, unload, and feed man and beast before proceeding to the next real town. But fifteen thousand people from Postville and environs saw the big show that day. It was a gala event in Postville's history. People came from the hills for miles around—came the night before the show got there, slept in tents, cars, wagons, houses, barns, on porches and vacant lots—but they saw the show and made history. Postville is a famous spot on the showman's map of to-day.

On the contrary there are dozens of good show towns which bar all tented shows because some of these shows have stung the citizens in years gone by.

The Volstead Act has undoubtedly been a great boon to the circus business. The people have more spending money, more buying power. All showmen have agreed to this statement.

If it were not for the perfect organization of the production and operating departments back with the show, as well as in the advance corps, the route agent would not be able to deliver the goods. I am

familiar with several lines of business, but for efficiency and loyalty among the employees, I know of nothing that beats the circus business.

George Meighan, now traffic manager of the big show, was "riding a country route" in the Middle West a few seasons back. Darkness overtook him on the road and he stopped at a farmer's house to learn the best turn to take back toward town and the bill car. The farmer, his family and his field hands were at supper. When the farmer learned Meighan's identity, he said:

"Come out here, I want to show you something." The farmer led the way around a turn in the road to where his barn stood flush with the highway. It was, in billposters' parlance, an ideal "daub," and two of Meighan's knights of the paste bucket and brush were busily covering the barn side with lurid circus bills. They had their Ford pointing toward the barn and were using its headlights as "spots" in which to work.

"They came along here, got my permission to put them bills up and give me some passes. I asked them in to supper but they said they didn't have time. Now they're working like all possessed. My hands won't work after hours. 'Drather eat supper. Show folks is funny."

When you witness the "grand entree" or other parts of the big show performance and see the beautiful ladies in silken tights and the masculine artists brilliantly garbed you probably do not realize that, on a wet night and a sticky lot all hands turn to and help "get the show up," or "tear her down," just as in the old wagon show days, but they do.

The big show got onto a "skinned" lot in Kansas City one day after a long haul and a late arrival. The lot was not in the river valley, but the sod had been "skinned off" the ground, the rain fell steadily and the show stuck.

All that day the highest priced performers and the lowest priced canvassmen labored side by side to get the show up. All that night they labored side by side to get the show down, and on to the train. That happens more than once during most seasons. Circus tradition recognizes no class when it comes to crises. The show must go on. Showmen have long memories, for good or evil. They never forget a friend and they always remember an enemy.

Many years ago [probably 1897], when the Ringling show was just "coming on," it rolled into Marshalltown, Iowa, one noon, in

a steady downpour—an all day rain. It had been all night "getting off the lot" at Cedar Rapids. The Marshalltown lot was under water. The Ringlings took one look at it, checked off the day as lost, and started out to pay local bills.

Ike Speers, Marshalltown billposter, was sitting at his desk contemplating the rain outside, when a man in a dripping slicker entered his office. In those days the Ringlings' likenesses appeared on every piece of

Ringling-Barnum ring stock horses being unloaded.



advertising matter. Ike recognized Charlie Ringling, who produced a shotbag filled with coins.

"I came to pay the billposting bill," he explained.

Ike looked through his desk, then replied: "Don't seem to find it."

Charlie fumbled in one of his wallets: "Here's a duplicate," he said.

Ike's reply was: "Oh, there's my bill." He pointed toward his wastebasket. The bill was there, in pieces.

"I don't get you," the showman remarked.

"That's all right. You're playing in hard luck," Ike answered.

"But I never knew a billposter to throw away one hundred and ten dollars," said Ringling.

"You'll be coming back some day," countered Ike, putting on his raincoat.

Billposter and showman descended the stairs to the street. Ike gave a nickel to the "punk" who drove Charlie's buggy: "Any of these street cars will take you back to the circus train," he said.

"Let's take a drive," said Ike to Charlie.

Then as now Ike was a good talker. He talked the local newspapers into cutting their advertising bills in two; he talked the man who had the local feed contract into taking his hay and oats back without cost to the show. He did the same thing with the man who was to supply the cookhouse.

Ike and Charlie had not met before. They parted, man-like, with a few words, at the dripping circus train, which presently pulled out for Boone, the next stand.

Ike lives in Santa Monica, California, now, but whenever he visits the show there's nothing the Ringling boys won't do for him. They never forget.

Charlie and John Ringling know the circus business because they have spent most of their lives in it. There are mighty few things they couldn't do around the show if they had to. I believe they could even "double in brass" as they used to do in the old wagon show days. But as a matter of fact they delegate most of the work around the show nowadays.

A member of the circus organization has a certain job to do. He does it on his own initiative if he is a boss or sub-boss—or under orders from some boss or sub-boss if he is a common workman. About the only men in authority fired from the big show, have been fired because they asked the Ringlings to decide something which they had been hired to decide for themselves.

This sense of responsibility, this approach to military discipline, are the results of long years of development which have made the American circus one of the most efficient commercial amusement institutions in the world. The German army's commissary was modeled on the cookhouse methods of the Barnum & Bailey circus when that circus toured Europe many years ago. Until they saw American circus "runs" in operation the French artillerymen loaded and unloaded their heavy field pieces with block and tackle, over the side of the car, instead of running them off the car ends. ^{WW}

Earl Chapin May's The Circus from Rome to Ringling, published in 1932, was the first general history of the American circus. A trouper in his younger days, he wrote extensively about the circus for popular magazines. He published books on many other subjects including histories of the canning industry and New England silversmiths. A native of Rochelle, Illinois, May was born in 1873 and died in 1960.



Ringling-Barnum men's dressing room.

Clyde Beatty and Majestic Poster Press

by Dave Price

As most *Bandwagon* readers are aware, Russell Bros. Circus was bought by Art Concello, put on the former Beckman & Gerety train, called Russell Bros. Pan-Pacific for a year and in 1946 became the Clyde Beatty Railroad Circus that many of us remember fondly.

Claude and Pauline Webb, the original owners of the Russell show, had ordered their paper from several printing companies, but by the Concello years most of it was coming from Majestic Poster Press in Los Angeles, just a few blocks north of the famous Washington and Hill circus lot.

With the change from Russell Bros. to the Beatty title, this practice was continued and the majority of posters (dates and pictorials) used by the Beatty show came from Majestic through the 1956 season. Several of these pictorials continued to be used by the show in the early sixties when it was called Beatty-Cole.

Concello and Beatty both wanted to advertise Beatty's act as well as possible and several posters showing the act were used. Initially the show was able to purchase a design from Erie Litho that they had originally created for Cole Bros. in 1935 and continued to print with other titles as Beatty appeared on various shows after leaving Cole Bros. I have always called this litho the "pink chair" bill (see

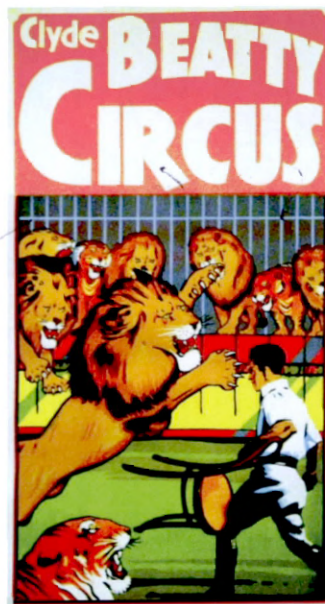


Corporation era. This is the poster I want to talk about.

A favorite pose of Beatty had been captured in a still from his first movie *The Big Cage*. Using this pose of Beatty and some of the lions and tigers from Erie's pink chair litho, the artists at Majestic were able to produce several variations of one basic design which could be used on the following size posters: half-sheet upright, half-sheet flat, one-sheet flat, three-sheet and eight-sheet. They

became the iconic Beatty poster for a generation.

Erie's pink chair pictured forty (count 'em) lions and tigers. Majestic's half-sheet upright, which incidentally can be seen in the movie *Ring of Fear*, used nine cats from the Erie pink chair poster: six lions and three tigers. Some of these were used just as on the Erie bill but others

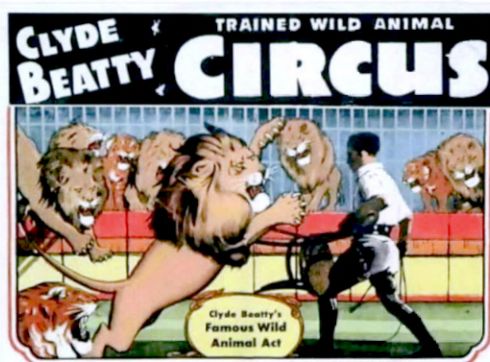
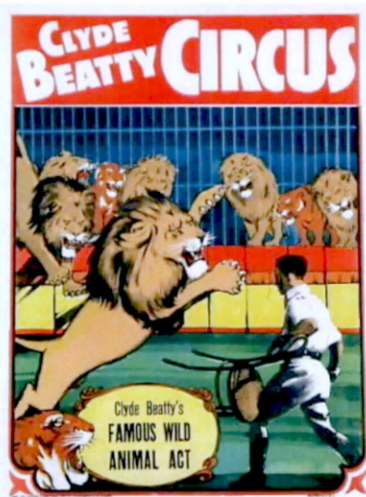


above left) as Beatty is seen holding off an arena full of jungle-bred beasts with a pink chair. It is really a beautiful litho. The Cole show used it in every size from a window card to a sixteen-sheet.

Erie was getting out of the circus poster business and eventually the pink chair poster was simply no longer available. The show contracted Forrest Freeland to design some paper showing Beatty. Forrest came up with three very nice posters, two showing Clyde and one of Harriet with her elephant-riding tiger, all in half-sheet size. Finally in the early fifties Majestic came up with a design that appeared on posters for many years, well into the Acme Circus

were reversed as to position, that is to say they faced the opposite direction. The same groupings used on the half-sheet upright were rearranged on the half-sheet flat, the three-sheet and the eight-sheet. But the one-sheet flat used only eight of the cats from the pink chair, one of the lions being omitted, and they are arranged differently than on the other posters.

In doing the artwork, some Ben Day was used for the half-sheets, that being a technique for adding shading which resembles a halftone with uniform dots such as the pictures in the your newspaper. But the other artwork was all done in solid colors. They



Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros in 1959 and were still used in the sixties.

made very striking and colorful posters.

The window-size posters, that is all but the three and eight-sheet, have spaces for Beatty's name at the bottom. Anytime the advance ran out of a particular size it was reprinted and often the printers would use a different type face for this wording, or use a different title cut at the top, or print the title in a different color, so there are a number of variations.

If the date tail remains on a particular specimen, it is possible to know when a particular variation was used, otherwise we can only speculate.

All styles except the three-sheet were retitled



When I joined the Beatty-Cole advance in 1960 we were "hanging" (in windows) and "posting" (on walls and barns) these posters as well as a few other designs from Majestic, although the show was shifting most of its paper printing to Enquirer in Cincinnati.

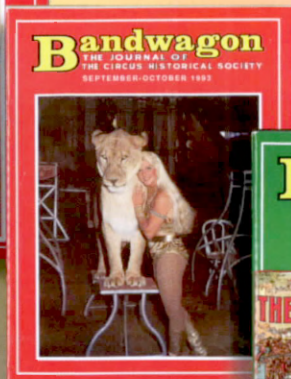
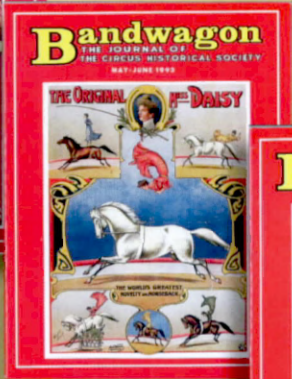
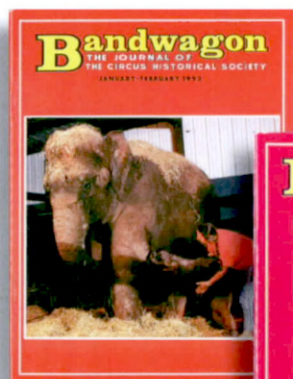
Enquirer produced some posters of Beatty including that very nice Roland Butler work similar to the 1957-1958 program covers, but there were never any posting-size bills showing Beatty's act once the Majestic eight-sheets ran out for the last time. I'm sure old Walter Clark, son of Peanut Willie Clark, was the last man to post any of these eight-sheets. I don't know who the lithographer was who hung the last of the window bills. Might have been me. BW

Dave Price, a former circus billposter, served as Secretary of the CHS in 1968-69 and again 1996-2003. He has collected Beattyana and researched Clyde Beatty's life since 1953.

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!

For a limited time only the Circus Historical Society is offering all six 1993 *Bandwagon*s as a group for \$25.00, about half the listed price.

In 1993 *Bandwagon* published articles on Hoxie Tucker, tough elephants, Miles White, Ringling Bros. in 1890-1891 and 1913, the Hodgini family, the United Nations Circus, Pat White, a review of the 1992 circus season, and many other subjects.



Fred Pfening, Jr., Joe Bradbury, Orin King, Stuart Thayer, Fred Pfening III, Richard Reynolds III, Dan Draper, Ernest Albrecht, Robert Kitchen and Fred Dahlinger, Jr. were among the authors.

A complete listing of articles and authors can be found in the *Bandwagon* index on the CHS website <<http://www.circushistory.org/>>.

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2:00 PM Windjammers Unlimited band
concert in the Museum of Art Courtyard.

Be one of the first to see *The Greatest Show on Earth* mural by William Woodward. Graciously donated to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art by the Feld Family, the Mural will be on view in its new permanent home in the Circus Museum's Tibbals Learning Center. Capturing the center ring stars of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Inc. in the late 20th century, this work of art features Gunther Gebel Williams, Lou and Dolly Jacobs, the Flying Vasquez Family, Philip Peters, Glen "Frosty" Little, and many more.

The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art | The State Art Museum of Florida | The Florida State University
Open daily 10am–5pm | Thursdays until 8pm | 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota, FL 34243 | Ringling.org | 941.359.5700 | [t](#) [f](#) [y](#) [f](#)

William Woodward *The Greatest Show on Earth* (detail), 1990 Gift of the Feld Family, 2012